

**Magazines and their online counterparts: how magazine websites compete or complement the print publication in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.**

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*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Journalism) at the University of Stellenbosch*

The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with various symbols, including a book and a torch, surrounded by a red and white wreath. Below the shield is a small banner with the Latin motto "Pictura roborant cultus recti".

Supervisor: Professor Lizette Rabe

Date: December 2010

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work – unless comprehensively referenced otherwise – and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for obtaining any other degree.

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November 2010

## **ABSTRACT**

Technological innovations such as the Internet and online media were predicted to lead to the demise of traditional print publications such as magazines. In order to remain relevant and accessible to consumers who are migrating online, print media have to incorporate online media such as companion websites into their marketing strategy.

Magazine publishers therefore have the difficult task of promoting their brands online in the form of interactive websites, yet without jeopardising the future of print media. This study focuses on the sustainability of print media in the wake of digital media developments.

This research study asks whether magazines and their online counterparts compete or complement each other in terms of three critical issues: circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

Qualitative research methodology was used to gather the data required for this research study. A comprehensive, self-administered questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate research design.

This research study was conducted within the theoretical frameworks of the theory of media evolution (which incorporates convergence) and Giddens' theory of globalisation, as these were deemed most appropriate and were both considered especially applicable to new media developments.

It can be concluded that if magazines have a proper online strategy and strategically publish content, the two mediums will not be in aggressive, direct competition. It is possible for a magazine and its online counterpart to complement each other, cement interactive relationships with consumers and advertisers, and thereby ensure that the print publication can be sustained if not grow.

## **OPSOMMING**

Daar is voorspel dat tegnologiese ontwikkeling en nuwe media soos die Internet tot die dood van tradisionele media soos tydskrifte en koerante sou lei.

Gevolgtik het tydskrifte amper geen keuse nie as om nuwe media deel van hul bemarkingstrategie te maak as hulle lesers wil behou.

Redakteurs het die netelige taak om hul tydskrifte, oftewel produkte, oor die Internet te bemark sonder om die toekoms van tradisionele media te skaad of heeltemal op die spel te plaas. Dié navorsingsprojek probeer dus bepaal hoe tradisionele media te midde van toenemend gewilde kommunikasiemiddele kan voortbestaan.

Die navorsing was toegespits op die vraag of tydskrifte en hul aanlyn-komponente mekaar teëwerk of aanvul wanneer dit by kritiese aspekte soos sirkulasiesyfers, advertensiewerwing en lesertalle kom.

Inligting is bekom deur kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodologie in die vorm van 'n vraelys wat deur kenners self voltooi moes word.

Die teorie van media-ontwikkeling en Giddens se teorie van globalisasie het as teoretiese raamwerk vir die projek gedien.

Die bevinding was dat indien tydskrifte 'n werkbare plan vir hul webtuistes opstel en nie al die artikels tegelyk en gratis weggee nie, die twee mediasoorte hulle nie in mededinging met mekaar sal bevind nie, maar mekaar eerder sal aanvul.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Motivation for the study**

The rationale for this study was triggered by the impression that, as a result of technological advances, the future of the magazine publishing industry is threatened by the relatively new, digital medium. As Ekron (2009:1) stated it:

Advances in the digital technology, which are rapidly changing the manner in which society distributes, receives and consumes media, have created the general impression that the three-century reign of newspapers and magazines is on the decline.

This study will therefore attempt to determine how magazines' websites affect the circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content – these factors were specifically selected because a magazine can essentially be divided into these three core sections (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008:391) – of their print counterparts.

Ekron (2009:1) argued that if magazine publishers developed efficient offline and online strategies, the two mediums could work in a “complementary fashion” and magazines would remain profitable. Therefore, one can also posit that the purpose of this study is to establish whether websites are indeed an effective way to increase awareness of the print publication and promote the brand, subsequently increasing circulation figures and profitability of the print edition, or whether websites will eventually obviate the need for magazines. Ekron (2009:1) put the problem in perspective:

The advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web has often been heralded as the final blow that would destroy the already embattled printed media, which are fighting dwindling readership numbers, declining circulation and shrinking advertising revenue. As with all these threats to its very existence, the publishing

industry is faced with the inevitable challenge to adopt the new medium and to find ways to use it beneficially.

Digital media could potentially be strong competition for traditional print publications as they are cheaper to produce – there are no printing or distribution costs for the publisher and Internet publishing requires relatively little financial capital (Ekron, 2009:16, 17), citing Meyer – and also compete directly for consumer attention and advertising income (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:2).

As a result of technological innovations, print media are forced to rethink their publishing strategy in order to retain their audiences, and subsequently, advertising income (Addison, 2006:33):

Magazines are the most tactile of media, the most personalised, the most possessible, and the most long-lasting. But running parallel to the new expertise possible in print content, magazines are having to adapt to the Age of Invisibility, where ink is evaporating into cyberspace.

Magazine publishers have the difficult task of promoting their brands online in the form of interactive websites, without jeopardising the future of print media (Ekron, 2009:1). They must “find ways to best exploit audience attention and advertising revenues through the new medium, without cannibalising their printed product” (Ekron, 2009:2).

Taking the immense popularity of new media, such as online magazines, mobizines and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter or MySpace, for example) into account (Mullins, 2008:1), this study is especially relevant in the current media landscape and will hopefully provide some insight into media consumption habits as well as some insight into the future of the printed media.

This study therefore also focuses on a problem currently of concern to traditional print publications (newspapers and magazines), namely their sustainability, and will hopefully

make a contribution to the ongoing debate as to whether magazine websites complement or compete with the print publication.

Li (2006:x) observed that “research always lags behind social activities”. Therefore, even though newspapers and magazines have been publishing content online for a number of years, not much research has been conducted on this topic, particularly from the magazine angle. Research regarding print magazines and their online counterpart is a fairly new research field as previous studies have concentrated mainly on the effect of the Internet on newspapers (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:3). Not only is it a new field of interest, it is also “more difficult to argue the ultimate consumer value of a magazine’s online services” (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:3).

Although Li’s (2006:x) research concentrated solely on newspapers, his words are also applicable for other print media, specifically magazines: “The reality is that not much literature on Internet newspapers exists. We still don’t know much about the operations, functions and effects of the new medium.”

Ekron (2009:7) also noted that very limited literature or research exists on the migration towards the digital medium:

Because the Internet is a relatively new medium when compared to the printed media, which has been in existence for centuries, publishers have very little institutional knowledge on which to base their assumptions in order to make relevant decisions and from which to draw inspiration when venturing online.

Trends for newspapers and magazines do have some parallels and are effectively facing similar challenges as online media becomes increasingly popular, in turn, presenting traditional media with a challenge (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:2). This researcher hopes that this study will

- determine how a print publication’s circulation figures are affected by its online

- counterpart;
- what effect an online counterpart has on the advertising revenue of the print publication;
  - and give publishers a better understanding of the content readers are willing to pay for, considering that the online publication generally offers free content whereas the print publication has to be purchased.

This study is topical and relevant because a need exists for in-depth research on the dynamics and relationship between traditional and so-called new media, taking factors such as circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content into account. Researcher Li (2006:3), who conducted a study on Internet newspapers, motivated the need for theoretical information on the new medium:

The growth of the medium offers great opportunities to examine existing media theory, explore relationships between the old and the new media, and explain and predict what the new medium brings to media industry as well as the whole society.

## **1.2 Background for the study**

Rapidly developing technology has a profound impact on information dissemination, as journalist Elmer-Dewitt (1995:34), explained: “The rush to get online, to avoid being ‘left behind’ in the information revolution, is intense.”

Speaking at the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), media mogul Rupert Murdoch spoke about the effect of the Internet on newspapers (Allan, 2006:1): “Scarcely a day goes by without some claim that new technologies are fast writing newsprint’s obituary.”

Though Murdoch was speaking about newspapers, the sentiments expressed in his speech can also be applied to magazines as another form of print media. While a fair amount of literature exists and research has been conducted on online newspapers and the effect of

the Internet on traditional newspapers, research is sparse regarding the implications of the Internet on the future of magazines.

However, the fact remains that numerous magazines are exploring the possibility of using new media forms in order to remain relevant to readers and attract new consumers.

While the Internet can potentially be a useful tool to strengthen reader relationships and improve the print publication's offerings, questions exist about how exactly to utilise the publication's online counterpart so as to complement, instead of compete, with the print publication. Before embracing new media as a means to promote awareness of the print publication, traditional media should first assess the impact of technological advances on key factors such as circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content, as these factors ultimately determine the publication's sustainability and profitability.

In order to place this study in context, the researcher will provide some background information in the subsequent literature review (Chapter 2) about studies pertaining to the development of online magazines in recent years. This same chapter will also provide further information about the impact this new medium has had on print publications in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The purpose of this study is to determine whether magazine websites negatively or positively affect their print counterparts in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content. For this purpose, the potential field was delimited to five magazines, namely Media24's outdoor magazine *Weg!* and its English counterpart *go!*, Associated Magazines women's titles, namely *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*, and New Media Publishing lifestyle titles, namely *Visi* and *Taste*. The reason for selecting these specific publications were to ensure that the research sample is representative of diverse magazine houses, while the specific publications selected have been fairly progressive in terms of online activities.

The majority of publishers in South Africa have launched online products to complement their print publication as readers and advertisers are apparently migrating online (Mullins, 2008:1). Despite the fact that an increasing number of print publications have an online presence, questions about whether new media will cannibalise old media are still rife.

Apart from the industry-wide concern about the cannibalisation of print media, often magazine staff and advertising salespeople are resistant towards the publication going online as print publications still generate higher advertising revenue than website advertising (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:11). Ekron (2009:10, 11) also noted that publishers in general do not expect their website counterparts to be profitable in the short term, and “online profitability is not growing at the same pace as online usage”. Another cause for concern is the fact that, according to Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:9), the majority of websites offer free content, making them essentially their own enemies in terms of cannibalising readers.

By conducting research on circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content, this study will examine what impact online magazines (new media) have on traditional media – specifically magazines – and subsequently, whether traditional media could actually use their online presence to their advantage (to gain new readers and brand awareness), instead of the publishing industry perceiving this new medium and the era of the Internet as a threat (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:2).

This study focuses specifically on factors imperative to the publication’s sustainability, namely circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content because these factors can be measured and analysed using data obtained from sources such as the Audit Bureau of Circulations, Nielsens NetRatings and media professionals.

## **1.4 Research goals**

### *1.4.1 Introduction*

The detailed research objectives of the study are guided by research questions or hypotheses (Mouton, 2001:122), which can also be described as educated guesses that can be tested and these tests can be replicated.

This researcher hopes that this study will

- determine how a print publication's circulation figures are affected by its online counterpart;
- what effect the launch of an online counterpart has on the advertising revenue of the print publication;
- and give publishers a better understanding of the content readers are willing to pay for, considering that the online publication generally offers free content whereas the print publication has to be purchased.

### *1.4.2 Hypothesis*

Questions about the effect of magazine websites on the print publication led to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

1.4.2.1 The circulation figures of print magazines will drop significantly if these publications launch a website counterpart as readers will migrate online.

1.4.2.2 The magazine's online counterpart can be used strategically to increase the print publication's circulation figures.

1.4.2.3 Magazine websites can offer multi-media, interactive advertising campaigns – the success of which can be accurately measured – at cheaper advertising rates, thereby potentially cannibalising the print publication's advertising revenue.

1.4.2.4 By offering free content on the magazine's website, plus additional interactive features such as forums, blogs, archives or newsletters, the print publication faces the risk of readers migrating online to avoid paying for content.



### **1.5 Theoretical points of departure**

The theoretical framework serves as the structure or foundation of the study by determining which variables need to be taken into account, formulating the correct research questions and selecting the most appropriate method for data collection (Fourie, 2001:230).

In recent years, as a result of rapid technological convergence and a global, computer-assisted media environment, the need has emerged for new or updated theories for journalism researchers. The development of online journalism, convergence of the media and the migration of readers online has presented new theoretical challenges, meaning that it is not always possible to apply theories suitable for traditional media to modern mediums.

The theory of media evolution and Giddens' theory of globalisation were considered to be the most relevant frameworks for this study, based on the hypotheses that consumers are migrating towards online media.

Media evolution deals with the introduction of a new medium and its subsequent growth, and incorporates theories such as the diffusion of innovation and convergence. This theory is of particular relevance to new media as it concentrates on the distribution of information from the source to the audience (Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:5), and discusses the technological changes and developments, such as the introduction of the World Wide Web, which dramatically alter the media and information environment (Fourie, 2001:299, 300).

The other theoretical framework selected for this study was British sociologist Anthony Giddens' theory of globalisation because it encompasses the fact that media is forced to remain relevant in the wake of numerous technological advances. Giddens described globalisation as "an all-encompassing phenomenon involving economic, political, technological and cultural transformation" (Fourie, 2001:599). Communication

technology is paramount to globalisation and digital developments eventually bring about cultural developments and significant changes in terms of accessing information and the way we use media (Fourie, 2001:600).

Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of these theories.

## **1.6 Research design and methodology**

Methodology focuses on how research is conducted, and Lemon (1997:30), citing Bogdam and Taylor, to provide the following definition:

The term methodology in a broad sense refers to the processes, principles, and procedures by which we approach problems and seek answers. In the social sciences the term applies to how one conducts research. As in everything else we do, our assumptions, interests, and goals greatly influence which methodological procedures we choose.

This study comprises textual (qualitative) data, which is analytic and interpretative (Lemon, 1997:32, 33), and focuses on the relationship between selected South African consumer print publications and their online counterparts.

The data collected will be analysed to establish common themes, trends and relationships between variables (Mouton, 2001:108), and interpreted against the existing theoretical frameworks pertaining to media evolution and Giddens' theory of globalisation.

The methodology used for the gathering of data for this research study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

## **1.7 Structure**

This thesis is structured according to the following outline:

### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

The introduction (this chapter) consists of an overview of the thesis, and focuses on the motivation for the study, provides brief background information on the research topic (the commonly used terminology for purposes of this research will be Addendum A) and outlines the purpose of the study. It outlines the research goals, the theoretical frameworks, research design and research methodology for this study.

### *Chapter 2: Literature review*

The purpose of the literature review is to ensure that this research study is not a duplication of previous research conducted. Existing literature on the same topic will be reviewed and discussed.

### *Chapter 3: Theoretical framework*

An exposition of the theoretical framework, which was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study, will be discussed.

### *Chapter 4: Research design and methodology*

The research methodology details the data collection process – in other words, how data will be collected, captured, and analysed. Qualitative research methodology was used in this study. The questionnaire used for purposes of the qualitative research will be Addendum B. The chapter provides an explanation for the sample design chosen, sampling techniques used and the sample size. Potential data collection errors or shortcomings will also be discussed.

### *Chapter 5: Results: Presentation and discussions*

The results obtained from the data will be explained. The main patterns relating to the respective hypotheses, and interesting statistics and findings of the data will be discussed. The main findings obtained from the data collected will be compared against the initial literature review and objectives of the study.

### *Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations*

The main findings derived from the data collected and analysed will be discussed comprehensively. A conclusion will be drawn based on the data collected and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

#### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

The limitations of a study of this nature should also be established. In this case, the researcher could establish the following limitations to the study in its present form:

1. Due to time and financial constraints, the research questionnaires were emailed only. In specific cases, where requested by research respondents, an interview was conducted instead based on the same set of questions.
2. Because the Internet is a labyrinth of information and there are a plethora of magazines on the market, it is not possible for a study of this nature to do research on all magazines. The study will therefore be narrowed down to examine specific South African consumer magazines. The research sample will comprise of Media24's outdoor magazines *Weg!* and *go!*, Associated Magazines women's titles, namely *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*, and New Media Publishing lifestyle titles, namely *Visi* and *Taste*.

#### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter broadly outlined the background and motivation of the study, stipulated the research goals, hypotheses, theoretical points of departure, and also provided details about the research methodology and structure of the thesis.

Such an introductory chapter should, according to Mouton (2001:122), include the rationale for the study, identify the research problem and introduce the overall aims and goals of the study. These elements were discussed in this chapter. The following chapter, Chapter 2, will concentrate on the literature review.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review provides background or contextual information on the research topic, and critically evaluates related research and thus provides a synopsis of existing knowledge or related studies conducted on the research topic (Mouton, 2001:86).

It is not possible to construct a sound theoretical framework for a thesis without a thorough review of related research literature, gathered from diverse sources such as the academic libraries of tertiary institutions, current news media, and peer-reviewed journals, among others (Burton & Steane, 2004:120, 127). These academic sources are reviewed according to common themes such as chronology and development within this research field, research findings and methodology employed.

The literature review helps to prevent unnecessary duplication of previous research studies conducted, discovers the most current theory and widely accepted findings on the proposed topic, ascertains the available instrumentation, highlights accepted definitions of key concepts and finds gaps or unexplored angles for future research projects (Mouton, 2001:87).

However, while literature reviews should strive to be exhaustive (Mouton, 2001:90), it is not technically possible to explore all the data ever generated on the said topic due to resource constraints, such as time constraints, or funding. In the view of this, this literature review therefore concentrates on seminal work or key sources pertaining to this study – namely the impact of magazine websites on the circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content of their print counterparts – and aims to be objective in its treatment of authors.

## **2.2 Historical overview**

Before providing a historical overview of the migration of print publications to digital media, it is necessary to first define, and distinguish between, traditional media – specifically magazines – and new media – specifically online publications – for purposes of this study.

### **2.2.1 Introduction to print magazines**

A print magazine can be defined as a tangible object (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:13):

Magazines are printed and bound publications offering in-depth coverage of stories often of a timeless nature. Their content may provide opinion and interpretation as well as advocacy. They are geared to a well-defined, specialized audience, and they are published regularly, with a consistent format.

A magazine differs from other media as it does not form part of daily routine, and usually contains in-depth information on a topic that interests the reader (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:6, 7). Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr described magazines as “the means of expression for the more reflective interpretation so vital to the educational process” while magazine scholar Theodore Peterson called it “the medium of instruction and interpretation for the leisurely, critical reader” (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:12). A magazine is a “friend that can be enjoyed anywhere” (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:12).

Magazines have a narrowly defined focus in terms of both demographics (for example, age, race or income) and psychographics (for example, values, attitudes, beliefs and interests) (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:7).

Unlike other mediums, such as newspapers, which have a short shelf life, magazines do not easily become outdated (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:13):

...they are the most permanent of all media. We shut off the television, leave the room, and forget about it, but we keep our magazines, stockpiling old issues of *National Geographic* in the spare room until we're forced to sell them to make room for the baby.

*The MPA Magazine Handbook* (2004/5:5) described a magazine as a reader's friend:

Reading a magazine is an intimate, involving experience that fulfills the personal needs and reflects the values of the reader, which is one reason the average reader spends 45 minutes reading each issue. A magazine is a friend, a tangible and enduring companion and an integral part of a reader's personal and professional life.

The *MPA Magazine Handbook* (2004/5:10) stated that despite media fragmentation, magazines continue to be "an important part of consumers' lives".

### **2.2.2 Introduction to magazine websites**

The "companion magazine website" is referred to as "the marketing arm of the print version" as it "supports and enhances the print magazine by helping to build its brand and reach new audiences while adding an extra dimension to the existing brand" (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:12). A companion website also provides editorial content, a chance to give direct feedback to the editorial team, and also an opportunity to interact with fellow readers (Ekron, 2009:3).

Ekron (2009:7), cited Randle, to highlight the importance of magazines having an online presence, and explained that they "need to adopt and master the web as a medium if they are going to remain relevant and prosperous".

Ekron (2009:1) cited Kummerfield to state that the launch of magazine website counterparts is a cause of concern for editors and publishers as a direct result of

interactivity on the Internet, the instant gratification of online media, immediacy and social networking, as many fear that the Internet will become the medium of choice.

### **2.2.3 Overview of the migration of print publications to digital media**

#### **2.2.3.1 The emergence of the Internet and online media**

The Internet – an abbreviation for Inter network – started as a network of computers linked by telecommunication lines for use by the US military and later a few scientists, before it became public (Campbell, 2004:5). The Internet was created because the need existed to transfer information “with the underlying innovations and technology being born of Cold War concerns about maintaining military and governmental lines of communication in the event of nuclear war” (Campbell, 2004:250).

The Internet initially comprised of file-sharing networks, transferring data between academics, as well as their text messages about the data being transmitted. Initially, the Internet was not really deemed appropriate for news, but when the World Wide Web (WWW) emerged in 1991, online journalism flourished (Campbell, 2004:250). Developed by Tim Berners-Lee, the WWW has allowed websites to develop and has subsequently become a popular mass medium (Preece, Maloney-Krichmar & Abras, 2003:4).

One of the big changes over the years has not only been the development of technology, but the audience using this medium: previously, online communities comprised mostly academics, but in the late 1990s the “combination of less expensive computing power, the Web, and several successful Internet service providers, enticed tens of thousands of people online” (Preece et al., 2003:5).

The Internet has since become a recognised mass medium and is the first “widely adopted non-print publishing alternative in almost 300 years” and the “first major new medium since the advent of television” (Boczkowski, 2004:5).



According to Li (2006:vii), “the ink on paper newspaper just passed its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday when its Internet counterpart was born”. As the World Wide Web increased in popularity around 1995, people started getting their news online (Boczkowski, 2004:4).

Internet newspapers had a rather low-profile launch and, in comparison to other emerging mediums, expectations for this new media were generally not high (Li, 2006:1). Despite these initial predictions, Internet newspapers have grown exponentially (Li, 2006:1):

The Internet newspapers grew into a mainstream medium so fast before many of us had enough opportunities to learn about the medium itself, the technology that supported the medium, and social and institutional factors that shaped the medium.

What differentiated the Internet from other mediums is that it allowed multi-format capacity, gave audiences control and input in terms of content, and the rate at which this medium reached audiences was unprecedented (Campbell, 2004:5). The Internet has given media consumers “new channels through which to seek gratification” (Ekron, 2009:3). Campbell (2004:5) referenced a British journalist to highlight the exponential growth of the Internet:

It took 38 years for radio to amass 50 million users. It took 13 years for television to do it. The Internet has done it in just four.

“The development of the Internet is likely to be determined by the same growth of the myriad unpredictable commercial and social interactions that have fuelled other communication services” (Odlyzko, 2000:n.p.).

It was also predicted that the Internet will create “digital convergence”, which refers to the amalgamation of computers, communications and broadcasting into a “single stream of discrete bits carried on the same ubiquitous network” (Odlyzko, 2000:12).

### **2.2.3.2 Why traditional media migrate online**

Print publications go online to reach new consumers, to protect their market, for purposes of product differentiation, to overcome the problem of market segmentation and to generate additional revenue sources (Kaiser, 2003:1). Magazines launch online counterparts for a number of reasons, such as (Kaiser, 2003:1):

- cross-advertising opportunities between the magazine and its online counterpart,
- the time-criticalness of information,
- the risk of the magazine's audience going online,
- the risk that a large number of competitor publications are already online;
- and the number of the magazine's readers that are online.

Ekron (2009:17) cited Randle to explain why traditional media need to embrace digital media:

Due to the popularity and especially the interactivity of the Internet and World Wide Web, media organisations recognise the need to adopt and master the web as a medium if they are going to remain relevant and prosperous.

The objective of a companion magazine website is to attract new readers for the print publication, to expand the readership with an online audience, to create revenue streams, to communicate with the target audience more regularly and to provide added value for advertisers, among other things (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:4).

One of the advantages of going online is the fact that various media can be combined for maximum impact – for example, an online article can comprise of text, images, hyperlinks to related websites, graphics, and sound or video clips (Foust, 2005:25).

The Internet is a cheap way of accessing news as almost all content from major publications are available online (often at no cost). For reporters, it means their stories

can be read by an audience not limited in terms of geographic location as they can be accessed worldwide (Foust, 2005:71, 72).

The other advantage is that, unlike print publications, digital is an interactive medium, allowing a two-way flow of information and it enables the user to contribute to an article or apply the content personally. For example, users can comment on articles or on a financial website, users can type in their outstanding bond amount and the website will calculate their specific monthly repayment (Foust, 2005:191). The Internet is an interactive medium with virtually unlimited opportunities for interaction between the publication and consumer (Florès, Müller, Agrebi & Chandon, 2006:2).

Because Internet publications are not bound by set deadlines, as is the case with other traditional media such as magazines which have to go to the printers on a pre-determined date, this medium allows for instantaneous updates and can publish breaking news virtually as it breaks, and articles can be constructed in such a manner that they can easily be modified or updated as a story develops (Foust, 2005:159).

Another benefit of the Internet is online analytics tools which can help publishers or editors to better understand consumers' online behaviour by utilising data such as web traffic reports (Mullins, 2008:n.p.). Web analytics can give publishers or editors valuable insights such as an exact indication of where consumers are coming from (for example, directed by specific search engines or clicking through from banner adverts), how consumers browse a website, how often a consumer visits a particular website, whether people return to the website regularly and which articles are most read (Mullins, 2008:n.p.).

### **2.2.3.3 Predictions about the sustainability of print media**

While newspapers and magazines both potentially face the same threat of declining circulation figures and declining advertising revenue as a direct result of development in online media, the dynamics of magazine publishing are different to that of newspapers

(Jurkowitz, 2006:n.p.):

Susceptible to some of the ills affecting newspapers and relatively immune to others, the magazine environment is tough, but not completely inhospitable.

Former magazine editor, Morrish (2003:2), predicted that magazines will continue to exist in some way, although the format is most likely to change as a result of digital technology:

For the time being, print and paper are dominant, but publishing may not always involve smearing ink on crushed trees. It may not always consist of still pictures and text. But the magazine idea will prosper as long as human beings require a convenient, accessible, portable and self-renewing source of information, explanation, provocation and amusement.

Other predictions take the tactile experience of reading a print publication, which is very difficult to create online, into consideration (Buckland, 2006:n.p.):

...some would also argue that the net is a poor substitute for the glossy, silky pages of a magazine. Glamorous and luxuriously-sized pictures don't work too well on the net where they are generally beaten into compression to maximise download speed. The bottom line is that reading a magazine is a premium experience not too easily replicated on the net... Reading a lifestyle magazine means relaxation and it's something done after-hours, on weekends and holidays, which is not traditionally a good time for Internet usage.

Magazines are generally considered to be a luxurious product – something that is usually read during “down-time” or while relaxing, according to American *Marie Claire* editor-in-chief Joanna Coles (Benkoil & Stableford, 2006:n.p): “As long as people take baths, there will always be a monthly magazine.” American *Good Housekeeping* editor-in-chief, Rosemary Ellis (Rebecca, 2006:n.p.), also noted that magazines are “for downtime,

for relaxing time, which is not how women describe the time they spend on the Web”.

Despite the numerous advantages of the Internet, magazines offer a tactile reading experience which give them a competitive edge, but cannot depend solely on this to survive (Johnson & Prijatel, 1998:19):

...[T]he internet is “no threat” to magazines because “it’s more comfortable, more rewarding, to see information in print than on the screen.” Magazines, however, don’t have completely smooth sailing ahead. Some magazines will continue to fail for the same low-tech reason: “they are irrelevant”.

To remain relevant, magazines need to develop a strategy to use the Internet to their advantage, without putting the print publication at risk of becoming obsolete.

### **2.3 Overview of related studies**

The magazine publishing industry has undergone significant changes in the past decade, yet, academic research on magazines and the impact of their online counterparts specifically in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content are scarce as it is still considered a new field of research, and previous academic studies have focused predominantly on the impact of new media on newspapers (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:2, 3). Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:3) explained:

While it is relatively easy to assess the customer benefit of getting the news online and on time, it is more difficult to argue the ultimate customer value of a magazine’s online services.

Researcher Li (2006:3) also noted that academic research on the impact of new media on traditional media is limited:

There is not much literature on newspapers on the Internet. Of the literature that

could be found on newspapers on the Web, most was simple descriptions of the new medium following its trend of development. Although the descriptions of the Internet newspaper development at each stage have their value in documenting the history of news media, they do not offer much insight about the mechanism of the development of the emerging medium.

To accumulate the relevant academic texts (either scholarly articles, peer-reviewed journals, theses or other research studies) needed for this research study, academic databases and search engines such as Google Scholar, the University of Stellenbosch's online library catalogue, RefSeek, WorldCat.org and Nexus Database System were used. Keywords such as "consumer magazines", "online strategy", "online magazines", "circulation figures", "magazine advertising", "editorial content" and "magazine websites" were used.

While there is not an abundance of academic research studies dedicated to this research topic, a few academic studies can be used as a frame of reference for this literature review.

The following academic texts were found to relate to this research study:

- Ellonen and Kuivalainen's (2005) article entitled "Magazine publishers and their online strategies"
- Ekron's 2009 research study, entitled *An Internet strategy for a niche magazine – a uses and gratifications approach*
- *The Magazine Publishers of America Magazine Handbook (2004/5) – A Comprehensive Guide for Advertisers, Advertising Agencies and Consumer Magazine Marketers*
- Gordon's 2008 analytical research study entitled *Building Magazine Reader Relationships Through The Internet – A Case Study of The New Yorker and Pointe Magazine*
- Consterdine's 2005 research study entitled "Routes to success for consumer

magazine websites – A survey by the International Federation of the Periodical Press”

- Kaiser and Kongsted’s 2005 quantitative research study entitled “Do magazines’ companion websites cannibalize the demand for the print version?”
- Novak and Hoffman’s 1996 study, entitled “New Metrics for New Media: Towards the Development of Web Measurement Standards”
- “The Essential Guide to Online Advertising in South Africa”, Edition 1:2007
- Muir’s 2009 study, entitled *Bridal website/Blogs vs print magazines*

These academic texts – from studies conducted either locally or internationally – were selected based on the criteria that they were the most recent and comprehensive research existing on a topic pertaining to one of the foci (circulating figures, advertising income and editorial content) of this study, or they pertain to consumer magazines which are exploring companion online strategies.

These related studies will be discussed in detail below according to the various foci of this study, namely circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

### **2.3.1 Focus 1: The impact of magazines’ websites on circulation figures**

Ellonen and Kuivalainen’s (2005) article entitled “Magazine publishers and their online strategies” pertains to this study. Their qualitative research article aimed to determine how traditional media should deal with the onslaught of the Internet, taking into account whether launching a website counterpart is beneficial for the magazine, and then finding an online strategy that best aligns with the print publication’s competitive strategy.

Based on a study conducted by FIPP in 2003, Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:5) determined that research participants stated the overwhelming reason for launching a companion website is to attract new readers for print products (92 percent), and to expand the readership beyond the print audience by creating an online audience (81 percent).

The results of a study conducted by the Online Publishing Association in 2004 determined that “complementary brand usage is typical and cannibalisation minimal in media brand websites” (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:8). Both publications target the same audience, but according to 63 percent of the magazine publishers who participated in the survey, the website counterpart attracts a “significant amount of new readers”, mostly people beyond the geographical reach of the print publication, and allows the publication to communicate with them on a more regular basis (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:8).

The emergence and rapid development of the Internet is not the first time that the magazine industry is facing a threat of possible extinction, but the difference this time is that publications are practically their own worst enemies (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:10):

A new media cannibalizes existing ones, only this time the magazine publishers themselves are also on the competitors’ side; they offer free content on their magazine brands’ web sites, and thus take the risk of cannibalizing their own readers and advertisers.

Another core function of the magazine website counterpart is to encourage readers to subscribe to the print publication: research determined that the online audience is starting to use the Internet to order subscriptions, and it is projected that five percent of new subscriptions in the US will be done online (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:9). Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:20) concluded that to determine whether launching a companion website will impact positively or negatively on the print publication is a “double-edged question” and the “traditional economic perspective is not attractive and there are even risks of cannibalizing the existing print magazine”.

In his 2009 research study, entitled *An Internet strategy for a niche magazine – a uses and gratifications approach*, Ekron (2009:15) noted:



The website offers the opportunity to defend the magazine's market position by conveying this information to an audience that extends beyond the readership of the magazine. Offering visitors the ability to subscribe to the printed product online or to manage their subscription accounts increases circulation and extends the duration of subscriptions.

One of the biggest reasons why magazines migrate online is to provide "support for the brand in the marketplace" and increase the stronghold of the brand in its niche (Ekron, 2009:15).

Another study, that of the Magazine Publishers of America, in their *Magazine Publishers of America Magazine Handbook (2004/5) – A Comprehensive Guide for Advertisers, Advertising Agencies and Consumer Magazine Marketers*, published results of the Mediamark Research Inc (MRI) study conducted in 2003 on magazine buying patterns. Based on the results of this research, 85 percent of people over the age of 18 read magazines; and more than 80 percent of households read or buy at least one magazine title annually (*The MPA Magazine Handbook*, 2004/5:13).

Gordon's 2008 analytical research study entitled *Building Magazine Reader Relationships Through The Internet – A Case Study of The New Yorker and Pointe Magazine* – is also relevant to this study. Gordon (2008:2) stated that print publications are battling to compete and work with their online counterparts for audience. "The results of being online have proven to be a serious threat to the print industry, with newspapers making cutbacks every day and book sales declining quickly" (Gordon, 2008:2). However, despite technological advances, the Internet will not necessarily cannibalise the print audience as many people still prefer a tangible magazine – for example, people who are commuting, older people who are not tech-savvy and people who do not like reading reams of text on a computer (Gordon, 2008:6).

In his 2005 research study entitled "Routes to success for consumer magazine websites – A survey by the International Federation of the Periodical Press", Consterdine conducted

a study on successful websites operated by consumer magazine publishers worldwide. A total of 71 websites participated in this survey by means of completing an online research questionnaire. The results established that the publishers or editors aim to attract the same audience for both the website and print publication – they are trying to create awareness about the publication to a specific target audience, and thereby expand the existing audience (Consterdine, 2005:3). He also established that companion websites attract a large portion – roughly 20 percent or more of the print audience – of new readers who do not read the print magazine.

According to Consterdine (2005:21), 56 percent of magazine publishers say they have the same competitors for the website as for the print publication; 33 percent say their two mediums have vastly different competitors, such as specialised sites, portals offering similar content, or other attractive websites which compete for the consumers' attention; and the remainder state their competitors are a balance between existing and different competitors. The only significant difference between print and website audiences is websites attract audience members from across the world – unlike most print publications, online readers are not restricted to a particular geographical region (Consterdine, 2005:4, 13). “The trend in audiences is very strongly upwards, as one would expect” (Consterdine, 2005:12).

The magazines which participated in the research survey concluded that the launch of an online companion website did increase the publication's audience, although generally, the website audience tended to be younger than the print publication's audience (Consterdine, 2005:12).

The 2005 quantitative research conducted by Kaiser and Kongsted in their study entitled “Do magazines' companion websites cannibalize the demand for the print version?” distinguished between subscriptions, foreign sales and impromptu purchases, and concluded that the impact of the companion website on the print edition varies greatly. Kaiser and Kongsted (2005:4) determined that there is no profound impact on total circulation of print publications as a result of having a website counterpart: over-the-

counter or impromptu purchases were negatively affected, but this was counterbalanced by a positive effect on subscriptions. Companion websites could also have a positive effect on circulation figures and popularity of the print publication as it promotes brand awareness and offers additional services to the audience (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2005:5). Citing a research study on the relationship between record sales and music downloads, where it was determined that the music downloads in fact entice consumers to later purchase that particular record, in the same way, the sampling effect of a website counterpart can help expand the magazine's audience and broaden its market reach (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2005:6).

Companion websites may therefore neither positively nor negatively affect the circulation of the print publication as the pros and cons of going online eventually cancel each other (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2005:8). The website might also attract some random consumers who would not have purchased the print publication in any event, and the reading patterns of the mediums differ vastly (reading a magazine is a leisure activity whereas people go online to obtain specific information) (Kaiser & Kongsted, 2005:8). They also concluded that, contrary to the belief that the Internet will render print publications obsolete, there is no definite evidence about whether companion websites positively or negatively affect the print publication, or the extent of these effects (2005:30).

### **2.3.2 Focus 2: The impact of magazines' websites on advertising income**

Novak and Hoffman's 1996 study, entitled "New Metrics for New Media: Towards the Development of Web Measurement Standards", discusses the importance of a universally accepted term/measurement for Internet advertising. Due to the fact that numerous websites are not yet commercially viable, advertising is one of the main revenue sources for online publications, as is the case with traditional media (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:1). Therefore, it is imperative to have an industry standard to measure the impact of online advertising (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:1):

Because the industry currently lacks standards for what to measure and how to measure it, the Web is having difficulty being accepted as an advertising medium and there is no assurance that firms will be successful in generating significant revenues from advertising in the future.

The lack of standardisation refers to the fact that there are no proper guidelines for measuring traffic on websites, no standard definitions or terminology, and subsequently determining an advertising rate based on this figure; consumer response to adverts cannot be measured; and there is no standard pricing model for online advertising (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:2). It was proposed that to avoid further confusion, any advertising terminology used for traditional media and which is also applicable for online advertising, should be used (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:28).

Because online advertising is based on a “many-to-many communication model”, whereas traditional media is a “one-to-many communication model”, it is necessary to standardise advert exposure metrics as well as determine interactivity metrics for online advertising (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:5). Novak and Hoffman (1996:6) therefore noted that “the Internet is the first commercial medium in which it is actually possible to measure consumer response, not just assume it”.

Novak and Hoffman (1996:12) concluded:

Clear, standardized terminology and measurement procedures are needed to 1) define visits to Web sites, 2) describe consumer behavior during a visit, and 3) relate visits to interactivity and outcomes. Such standards are critical to demonstrate the viability of the Web as a commercial medium, and provide mechanisms for tracking usage as well as measuring investment opportunities and business success.

As this study will be assessing the impact of online advertising on traditional print media, the study conducted by Novak and Hoffman is of particular relevance as it is necessary to

first have standardised advertising terminology to accurately discuss and analyse the impact of magazines' websites on advertising income.

In his 2009 research study, entitled *An Internet strategy for a niche magazine – a uses and gratifications approach*, Ekron (2009:15) noted that increasing the traffic online is the same as an increase in circulation of the print publication, and therefore makes the advertising space more desirable to advertisers. “Due to audience segmentation the printed product may have relinquished readers to the Internet. These readers can be regained through an online strategy” (Ekron, 2009:15). The website provides publishers with another opportunity to generate advertising income, and also allows advertisers to market their product across various mediums and thereby reach a bigger audience.

According to “The Essential Guide to Online Advertising in South Africa”, online advertising is an effective and less expensive manner to market a product or service. It is the only medium which offers interactive, two-way communication between consumer and advertiser, and also enables advertisers to accurately track statistics – audited by Nielsen/NetRatings – for their particular advert (OPA Guide, 2007:2). Online advertising is increasing steadily: according to information sourced from Nielsen/NetRatings (OPA Guide, 2007:3), it took nine years (1994 – 2003) for the online industry to generate R60-million revenue, an amount which practically trebled in the following three years.

Ellonen and Kuivalainen's 2005 qualitative research article, namely “Magazine publishers and their online strategies”, also discusses the growth of online advertising in terms of publishers' online strategies and how traditional media can remain relevant despite the perceived threat of online media. The interactive nature of the Internet and the fact that it competes for a critical source of revenue for traditional media, namely advertising income, is a major challenge for traditional media (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:2)

Quoting Posnock (2004) and *Folio Magazine*, Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:4) stated that magazine websites were outperforming their print counterparts in terms of advertising pages.

Online magazines generate revenue predominantly by means of advertising (this includes everything from a small banner advert to site sponsorship), and most also have e-commerce functionality (they mostly sell subscriptions to consumers) (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:9), yet most magazines will “never make money from a website” (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:11).

Consterdine compiled a research study entitled “Routes to success for consumer magazine websites – A survey by the International Federation of the Periodical Press” in 2005, and this study includes a chapter on advertising. The majority of publishers (66 percent) who participated in the 2005 FIPP survey confirmed that they attracted new advertisers online who did not previously advertise in the print publication (Consterdine, 2005:18). New advertisers were attracted by the following factors (Consterdine, 2005:18):

- interactive possibilities (a link which redirects from the magazine website to the advertisers’ website)
- sales leads (magazine readers who click on the advert are considered to be seriously interested in the product or service advertised)
- audience size (some websites attract a large audience which is not restricted to a specific geographical region)
- different audience (websites often attract people who do not read the print publication)
- audience measurability (advertisers can measure the click-through rates of their adverts and see how many people were interested in their product or service)
- online advertising rates is usually cheaper than print advertising rates
- advertisements can be animated online.

One of the parallels between advertising online or in the print publication is that both are considered contextual advertising, meaning adverts are placed that are relevant to a specific target audience, so advertisers have a better chance of converting a sale (Consterdine, 2005:19).

### **2.3.3 Focus 3: The impact of magazines' websites on editorial content**

Ellonen and Kuivalainen's 2005 qualitative research article, entitled "Magazine publishers and their online strategies", also focused on the impact on editorial content when a magazine launches an online counterpart. Based on findings of a FIPP survey conducted in 2003, it was established that none of the participating magazines charged for access to content, and as little as 10 percent of these publications charged for access to restricted sections of the website (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:9). While it is estimated that paid content will increase (especially if magazines sell individual articles or repackage content), based on the aforementioned research, it is currently not a significant source of income for magazines (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:9).

To avoid cannibalisation of the print publication, editors and publishers should strategically select what they publish online and use the Internet's potential to their advantage: according to the 2003 FIPP survey, the website should not merely be a replica of the print publication but should contain interactive features, archives and forums (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:10).

Gordon's 2008 analytical research study entitled *Building Magazine Reader Relationships Through The Internet – A Case Study of The New Yorker and Pointe Magazine* – also touched on content, and is therefore suitable for this foci. Magazines must find innovative ways to compete or at least keep abreast with more immediate mediums such as the Internet: for example, on the companion website, magazines can publish breaking news, but in the print publication, they can publish an in-depth feature on the same topic (Gordon, 2008:4, 5). Another benefit of an online publication is that it is not limited by space constraints as with the print publication, so a journalist can write

more detailed articles online, and enhance written content with audio or video clips or picture galleries (Gordon, 2008:14, 16). Magazines should utilise new media to “improve, maintain and conserve their relationships with readers” by means of offering enhanced information and entertainment, and should also try to generate feature ideas online – by means of online audience surveys, for example – which can later be implemented for the print publication (Gordon, 2008:19).

Muir’s 2009 study, entitled *Bridal website/Blogs vs print magazines*, stated that traditional media such as newspapers and magazines are becoming increasingly interactive, and thereby allowing users to contribute to the content, but at the same time, it is difficult to retain readers’ attention as a result of the vast amount of content available – often freely – online.

In his research study, entitled *An Internet strategy for a niche magazine – a uses and gratifications approach*, Ekron (2009:ii) noted the magazine industry is under pressure to launch online publications as “a culture of instant gratification of media needs, pervasive social networking and the immediacy of content delivery” creates the fear that readers will migrate online.

Ekron conducted qualitative research by means of two descriptive surveys to determine a successful strategy for magazines migrating online. Quoting research conducted in 2006 by the Bivings Group, Ekron (2009:7) stated that unlike newspapers, magazines are “more than mere information providers to its readers, but represent a culture of relaxation whilst holding the physical product in their hands”.

Ekron (2009:12) defined a “destination site” as a website that usually has unique content, applications that are often updated, opportunities to interact and engage, and promotes a strong sense of community between the editor and the audience. This site becomes a “fully fledged media product in its own right”, but most magazines don’t have an audience which is loyal enough or lack resources to sustain such a website (Ekron, 2009:12). A companion site, on the other hand, serves to support and enhance the print



publication and create awareness of the brand to new audiences by means of whetting a visitor's appetite with extracts of content from the magazine, user-generated content and additional content to reward them for going online (Ekron, 2009:12, 13). A subscription site contains no editorial content and encourages no interaction with the magazine's audience: its sole purpose is to promote subscriptions to the print magazine (Ekron, 2009:13).

One of the advantages of a magazine website is the added editorial benefit, namely that the website helps editors to generate new feature ideas or content for the print publication (Ekron, 2009:14). The website can be used to communicate the print publication's values to readers and interact regularly with readers, provided that the website is updated regularly to encourage visitors to return (Ekron, 2009:15).

A companion website can "complement and enhance the printed product" if it operates as a brand extension and not direct competition, and the companion website also proves that the magazine is keeping abreast of modern communication trends (Ekron, 2009:15).

Ekron (2009:60) found that given a choice between obtaining information from the Internet or a print magazine, respondents "perceive the Web as better suited than the magazine to gratify their cognitive media needs". None of the websites surveyed charged any fee for access to website content, proving that most websites have abandoned the paid subscription model (Ekron, 2009:64). "A significant portion of the content for these websites is generated by editing and packaging content that had not previously been used in the magazine" (Ekron, 2009:64).

Consterdine's research study, entitled "Routes to success for consumer magazine websites – A survey by the International Federation of the Periodical Press", listed the following factors as reasons for companion websites attracting new audiences: "time-critical information, interactive content, searchable databases and archives, and personalized content" (2005:13). "It is also attractive to audiences that the content on almost all consumer websites is free – unlike the host magazine which must be paid for"

(Consterdine, 2005:13). The results of the 2005 FIPP survey concluded that the majority of websites (80 percent) offered free access to content (Consterdine, 2005:17).

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter provided the necessary contextual and historical information for this study, and referenced numerous academic texts to provide background information about the trend of traditional print publications migrating towards online media for a diverse variety of reasons, such as immediate news updates and improved interaction with consumers.

This chapter referenced and reviewed previous research – focusing specifically on circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content – conducted on the same topic in order to ensure that this study is not merely a duplication of previous research, but will provide some new insights.

The following chapter, Chapter 3, comprises a review of the theoretical frameworks which have informed this study.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapters, the research topic was introduced and motivated, a detailed outline of the research study and structure of the study was given and existing, relevant literature on the research topic was critically reviewed to provide sufficient background information for the study and prevent unnecessary duplication. This chapter will focus on the theoretical or conceptual frameworks that have informed the study.

The theoretical framework refers to the theories and issues which will be addressed during the research process. Borgatti (1996:n.p.) explains that a theoretical framework comprises numerous interrelated concepts and it provides a guideline for the research, establishing which variables need to be measured and the statistical relationship that needs to be taken into account.

The function of the theoretical framework is to demonstrate the author's knowledge on the proposed research topic, and it serves as the structure which guides the research in terms of formulating the research questions, the data collection methods and subsequent data analysis (Fourie, 2001:231).

Researcher Wood noted that theory has both a scientific and practical value as it informs researchers how to “describe, interpret, understand, evaluate and predict a phenomenon” and provides an “overview of the development of a discipline, its relation(s) with other disciplines and its possible future developments” (as cited in Fourie, 2001:230). Wood defined theory as follows (as cited in Fourie, 2001:231):

Theory can be defined as a human account of what something is, how it works, what it produces or causes to happen, and how that something can be changed, if necessary.

Fourie (2001:232) describes theory as follows: it serves to describe a phenomenon, explains how it works, attempts to understand, predict and control the phenomenon and attempts reform. Because a theory is a human perspective on a particular topic, it is not always objective or necessarily true, but merely provides a different viewpoint or different supposition on a research topic (Fourie, 2001:231). When reviewing all the different theories on a particular topic, the researcher is able to gain profound insight and a better understanding of the research topic.

Theory consists of four building blocks, namely ontology (view of human nature and its activities), epistemology (the science of knowledge and the way of investigating humanity and its activities), purpose and focus (Fourie, 2001:232, 235).

This research study aims to add to the current body of research on migration of readers from traditional print mediums to a digital medium such as the Internet or online publications, against the relevant theoretical framework.

### **3.2 Theories and technological developments**

As a result of rapid technological convergence and a global, computer-assisted media environment, the need has emerged for new or updated theories or theoretical “reorganisation” (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:229):

Without rethinking some older perspectives, the current changes cannot be adequately described. The economic, political, technological, and cultural changes must be relocated within a theoretical framework that gives us a sense of where and why the changes are taking place, and how they affect journalism and society as a whole.

Ostini and Fung (2002:42) also concurred on the need for new media theories and frameworks:

Many of the old frameworks – including those of the media such as the Four Theories of the Press (Four Theories) – are obsolete and inapplicable for contemporary analysis. The new order has already annulled their explanatory power. We need new ideas to account for the development of our internationalized and diverse forms of media.

The development of online journalism, convergence of media and migration of readers have presented new theoretical challenges. For example, multi-faceted developments as a result of convergence and Internet-based communication are often reduced to simply “media merging”, when in fact, it is intricately linked to social developments (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:242).

The Internet has revolutionised journalism, and journalists use the Internet both as a research tool and also a new form of media or a publishing opportunity (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:242). They explained:

The Internet allows the distribution of information to large masses without itself being a mass medium, in the traditional sense of the word. It combines aspects of interpersonal and mass communication (cf. Morris & Ogan, 1996), with unknown consequences for both traditional and new media. While on a technological level, the Internet can be seen as a democratic tool for information distribution, this does not mean that there are equal chances for every communicator.

Modern media has had an impact on communication structures and economics of the media: globalisation has also affected both media companies in the sense that they are operating in a global village and their audiences are not limited to a particular geographic region (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:243).

It is therefore necessary to adapt or rework existing journalism theories so that it can be applied to the Internet because it is not always possible to apply theories intended for traditional media on modern mediums. Some existing theories do not account for changes

in the media, hence there are “theoretical gaps” and theory missing for Internet research (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:243). However, the researchers were unable to attribute whether this was as a result of “‘normal’ development visible in every field of studies or to the special conditions of Internet communication” (Loeffelholz & Quandt, 2005:243).

### **3.3 Overview of the Four Theories of the Press**

Media theory generally begins as simplified assumptions about a particular topic and then develops into more complex assumptions which also provide commentary and insight on developments within society (Fourie, 2001:230). At least four broad categories/paradigms of media theory exist (Fourie, 2001:237):

- administrative theory and research
- critical theory and research
- technological deterministic theory and research
- information society theory and research.

Initially, Four Theories of the Press existed, and these basic media theories – first published in the 1950s – were considered the authoritative research and dominated academic discourse on the subject for almost 40 years (Curran & Park, 2000:3). “The Four Theories are a linear combination of two analytical sub dimensions based on state systems: authoritarian and libertarian” (Ostini & Fung, 2002:42). Seminal work by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963:2) detailed the Four Theories of the press as follows:

#### **3.3.1 The Authoritarian Theory**

The oldest concept of the press, later named the Authoritarian Theory, came into existence during the Renaissance, shortly after the invention of printing (Siebert et al., 1963:2). During this period, truth was not something for a mass audience, but rather a concept reserved for a few so-called intellectually elite people. As a result, there was

virtually no private media ownership, instead rulers were in control of the press (a top-down approach), who used it to inform their subjects of their policies (Siebert et al., 1963:2). This form of media ownership meant that the media did not function as the Fourth Estate and could not hold people in power accountable and bring them to task. Instead, the press was the mouthpiece of the government during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a powerful tool for the people in power (Siebert et al., 1963:3).

### **3.3.2 The Libertarian Theory**

During the period of Enlightenment and as a result of changes such as political democracy, free trade and freedom of religion, the need developed for a “new concept of the press” (Siebert et al., 1963:3). This new theory, the Libertarian Theory, no longer reserved truth only for people in positions of power, and the public were deemed to be able to decide between truth and falsehood (Siebert et al., 1963:3). The press was no longer a mouthpiece for the government, but “a partner in the search for truth” – the “Fourth Estate” – and the need was established for a free market place of ideas and information (Siebert et al., 1963:3).

### **3.3.3 The Social Responsibility Theory**

During the twentieth century, there were new demands, responsibilities and expectations of the mass media (Siebert et al., 1963:4). Once again, there was a shift of power due to financial reasons: media ownership became limited to an elite group of people as during the Authoritarian era, although not necessarily people in political positions (Siebert et al., 1963:4). Media owners had the power to decide which information to publish and how to portray events. Information was not necessarily objective or genuinely in the public interest. This formed the basis for the Social Responsibility Theory (Siebert et al., 1963:5):

... that the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly represented and

that the public has enough information to decide; and that if the media do not take on themselves such responsibility it may be necessary for some other agency of the public to enforce it.

### **3.3.4 The Soviet Communist Theory**

As with the Authoritarian Theory, the Soviet Communist Theory once again reverts back to the press being a tool of the ruling power, and it was state owned (Siebert et al., 1963:5). Making a profit was no longer the objective; the press was controlled by means of iron-fisted dictatorship and the press was only allowed to publish the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist “truth” (Siebert et al., 1963:5).

### **3.4 Development of media theories**

Numerous researchers, among them Curran and Park (2000:3), criticised these Four Theories, claiming that it advanced a “convenient, idealist argument” and hardly focused on any other media systems, only on Western media. The original Four Theories were also not flexible enough to accommodate modern media systems; hence additional theories have been developed and revised.

The “traditional” or “original” four theories of the press have been critiqued by numerous researchers: for example, Lowenstein and Merrill’s research criticised that Siebert et al.’s theories are based on a

too restricted (Western) description of concepts like freedom, democracy, and so on, which do allow little or no generalisations; and that, on the other hand, reality often doesn’t comply to the principles defined in philosophical terms (Servaes, 1988:5, 6).

Some more failings of these theories were noted by researchers (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:9):



Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm did not, in fact, empirically analyze the relation between media systems and social systems. They looked neither at the actual functioning of media systems nor at that of the social systems in which they operated, but only at the “rationales or theories” by which those systems legitimated themselves.

As a result of this, various other media theories have been developed over the years, namely the political economy theory, the uses and gratifications theory, Functionalism and Postmodernism to mention but a few examples. However, the dire need still exists for new media theories and frameworks, especially in light of technological developments in the media. Therefore, considering the lack of appropriate theoretical frameworks for Internet-related journalism research, it was deemed most appropriate to apply these theories for purposes of this research study:

- the theory of media evolution (incorporating theories such as diffusion of innovation and convergence)
- Giddens’ theory of globalisation.

These theories were selected because they both pertain to new media, in light of the trend of consumers apparently migrating towards online media, and its subsequent impact on circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content. The theory of media evolution pertains to the introduction and adoption of technological developments, such as the Internet, which has radically altered the media landscape and media consumption habits (Fourie, 2001:299, 300). Giddens’ theory of globalisation focuses on how media must adapt to remain relevant considering the numerous technological developments which have a profound impact on the way people use and access information (Fourie, 2001:600).

### **3.5 Theory of media evolution**

The media are always in a state of “technological, institutional and cultural change or development; they have never stood still” (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2003:10).

Media development is based on various internal and external factors which occur over a lengthy period of time, therefore a theoretical framework – such as Stöber’s 2004 theory of media evolution – is necessary to analyse issues such as power, subordination and ideology (Fourie, 2007:54).

Media evolution theory will be applied to gain a better understanding of the evolution of the Internet, and how it has impacted on the survival of traditional media in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content, for the purpose of this study.

Media evolution is “different from as well as similar to the evolution of living things” (Levinson, 1997:1). Levinson (1997:xvi) developed an anthropotropic theory of media evolution:

All media eventually become more human in their performance – that is, they facilitate communication that is increasingly like the ways humans process information “naturally”, or prior to the advent of given media.

This media evolution theory pertains to communication developments, linked to technological advances, such as the fact that the telephone has replaced the telegraph, or black and white television has been upgraded to full colour (Levinson, 1997:xvi).

In essence, Stöber’s theory of media evolution “considers the media as not only a product of technical innovation but also that of social institutionalisation” (Fourie, 2007:54). He further defined institutionalisation as

the interaction between four sub-systems (technology, law and politics, culture and economy) which bring about change to the media derived from dissatisfaction with the status quo (Fourie, 2007:54).

Stöber's theory comprises three phases, often gradually merged or intricately intertwined, namely (Fourie, 2007:54):

- Invention: A substantial change occurs in the media, which is considered to be an improvement or positive development
- Innovation: A framework is established within old laws to legitimate the changes. Audience become aware of the developments via transformation in media content. Once the new media dispensation becomes accepted, debates ensue regarding laws and policy to account for these changes, and later new functions, economic models and legal regulation are established
- Diffusion: Acceptance, or at least tolerance, of the changes.

Other researchers divide media evolution into different stages or life cycles (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:707, 711, 712, 714):

- Birth (technical invention): Most new mediums are created by improving, upgrading or developing an old medium
- Market penetration: The new medium enters the media market, aiming to attract new users
- Growth: The new medium experiences increased audience penetration
- Maturation: The medium becomes widely used and is in its so-called "Golden Age" as it dominates the media environment
- Self-defense, or defensive resistance: The established medium becomes threatened and competes with a new medium
- Adaptation, convergence or obsolescence: Traditional media adapts, or merges with the new medium, to retain its audience, or alternatively, ceases to exist.

A condensed version by researcher Caspi, which is based on the marketing model and comprises four stages of media development, also exists (as cited in Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:709):

- Inauguration: Much public attention is given to the new medium
- Institutionalisation: Widespread public adoption and routinisation of the new medium
- Defensiveness: The hegemony is threatened by a new medium
- Adaptation: The *modus vivendi* between old and new medium.

Over the past five centuries, researcher Saffo established that a new idea takes 30 years – hence called the 30-year rule – to become part of a culture (as cited in Fidler, 1997:8). In the first 10 years the innovation generates much interest, in the second decade market penetration occurs and in the last decade it becomes widely used and adopted (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:710). Most ideas are not “overnight successes” as is widely believed, but take a longer period of time (Fidler, 1997:8):

The reason life feels so much more rapid today, Saffo contends, is not that individual technologies are accelerating at a faster rate or that things are happening more quickly than they have in the past. What’s actually occurring is that more technologies are coming up at the same time. It is the unexpected cross-impact of maturing technologies that creates this powerful acceleration that we all feel.

Previous studies focused on only one medium, but the need exists for an inter-media approach because new media influence, and eventually become, old media (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:708).

Constant interaction between new and older media is a key factor in the successful or unsuccessful evolution and specific direction of the new medium (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:709).

On the other hand, as a new medium is introduced or brought about by technological change, at the same time, it means an older medium moves into the defensive stage. The defensive stage can be further sub-divided, according to Napoli (as cited in Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:710):

- complacency
- resistance (rhetorical, legal and economic)
- differentiation
- diversification.

Ultimately, older media can either undergo “mediamorphosis” – the medium can adapt in order to remain relevant – or commit “mediacide” – predict and cause its own death (Lehman-Wilzig & Cohen-Avigdor, 2004:710).

Although the theoretical framework of media evolution can be used to understand past media developments, it cannot be used to predict future trends because “the process remains obscure as we do not know which of the four sub-systems will become the driving force of change”, noted Stöber (as cited in Fourie, 2007:56).

The diffusion of innovation theory and convergence will be the frameworks within which this study is conducted, and will therefore be discussed in more detail.

### **3.5.1 The diffusion of innovation theory**

Each new invention is accepted by society in a specific fashion which is referred to as the diffusion of innovation theory (Fourie, 2001:299). Numerous developments in the media such as the printing press, the telegraph, satellite television, mobile phones, email, and the Internet, can all be explained by the diffusion of innovation theory (Fourie, 2001:299, 300). In turn, these same media developments are then used to distribute information to a mass audience and make them aware of new trends (Fourie, 2001:300).

The initial diffusion of innovation research, focusing on the S-shaped diffusion curve, was conducted in 1903 by French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (Hornor, 1998:1). The S-shaped curve was selected for research purposes as it was widely believed that the adoption rate of most innovations follow an S-shaped curve (Hornor, 1998:1).

The diffusion theory is essentially about the spread of information from the source to the audience (Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:5). Researcher Rogers defined the diffusion of innovation theory as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of the social system” (as cited in Ardis & Marcolin, 2001:176).

The diffusion of innovation theory states that the media itself is considered to be an innovation, brought about by technological developments which result in new ways of communicating (for example, the Internet, email and cellphones) (Fourie, 2001:299, 300). The invention of the printing press is considered to have one of the biggest impacts in terms of making the media more accessible to the masses: “The printing press brought about a massive change in public communication culture and created a completely new information environment” (Fourie, 2001:299). It must also be noted that all innovations are not necessarily adopted by society (Fourie, 2001:300).

This particular theory is applicable to new media and technological developments and also the importance of the media in spreading the word about new developments, trends or fashions. These technological developments – especially most recently, the Internet and World Wide Web – assist greatly in spreading information to a mass audience, and subsequently introduce a mass audience to new trends, cultures and so forth (Fourie, 2001:300).

DeFleur and Dennis explained the core concepts of the diffusion of innovation theory (as cited in Fourie, 2001:300):

- The public or society needs to be made *aware (awareness stage)* (usually by the mass media) of an innovation before they can adopt it
- People *interested (interest stage)* in a particular innovation are eager to learn more about it, and usually use information disseminated by the media
- The innovation is then *assessed (assessment stage)*
- Interested parties acquire and experiment with the innovation (*trial stage*)
- After trying out the innovation, and its popularity grows, the innovation becomes adopted into society (*adoption stage*).

The diffusion of innovation theory or diffusion model outlines the five stages of the adoption process (Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:6):

- awareness
- interest
- evaluation
- trial
- and adoption.

The original diffusion model also noted that “individual differences cause people to adopt innovations at different time periods and utilize varying amounts and sources of information” (Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:6). Rogers later added two more stages of the adoption process, namely the confirmation stage and re-invention stage (as cited in Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:6).

In the 1940s, sociologists Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross classified the adopters according to the time it took the groups to adopt the innovation (as cited in Hornor, 1998:2). The groups were

- innovators
- early adopters
- early majority

- late majority
- and late adopters or laggards.

Various factors such as adopter characteristics or the communication process can have an impact on the diffusion rates (Ardis & Marcolin, 2001:176).

The diffusion of innovation theory has been criticised as having some shortcomings, such as that the predictive properties of the theory is not reliable or adoption factors can be locally unique (Ardis & Marcolin, 2001:181, 183).

The diffusion of innovation theory can be summarised as comprising of four key elements, namely “the innovation, communication through certain channels, over time, and among the members of a social system” (Hornor, 1998:10).

Due to the rapid technological advances in the media and society in general, there is renewed interest in the diffusion theory, which can be applied on a micro or macro level (Abbott & Yarbrough, 1999:5). Considering the burgeoning new media, the diffusion of innovation theory is of particular relevance in modern society.

### **3.5.2 Convergence**

There are two forms of convergence, namely technological convergence and the amalgamation of media ownership (which often pertains to economic consolidations and a “reconfiguration of media power”) (Jenkins, 2004:34, 35). Considering the focus of this research study, namely the impact of magazine websites on the print publication, the research will be conducted within the theoretical framework of technological convergence.

In the 1980s, convergence referred to the development of digital technology and multiplicity, specifically combining aspects such as text, video, images and sounds which were previously considered separate elements (Briggs & Burke, 2005:216). “Digitization,



the convergence of text, sound and picture into a simple binary language represented by zeros and ones, is a product of the 1980s” (Herbert, 2000:13).

The word “convergence” pertains to organisations and processes (for example the fusion of media and telecommunication industries), societies and cultures (Briggs & Burke, 2005:216). Convergence is “the migration of different media into an integrated seamless form” (Cunningham, Tapsall, Ryan, Stedman, Bagdon & Flew, 1998:14). Convergence is the fusion point where “old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (Jenkins, 2006:2). Convergence incorporates technological, industrial, cultural and social changes (Jenkins, 2006:3).

Political scientist Ithiel de Sola Pool’s 1983 seminal book, entitled *Technologies of Freedom*, provided the first definition of convergence (Jenkins, 2006:10):

A process called the “convergence of modes” is blurring the lines between media, even between point-to-point communications, such as the post, telephone and telegraph, and mass communications, such as the press, radio, and television. A single physical means – be it wires, cables or airwaves – may carry services that in the past were provided in separate ways. Conversely, a service that was provided in the past by any one medium – be it broadcasting, the press, or telephony – can now be provided in several different physical ways. So the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use is eroding.

Fourie (2001:114) defined the term convergence as:

Convergence is used in the sense of the coming together of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the merging of telecommunications and traditional media technologies, to create new ways of producing, distributing and using knowledge, information and entertainment.

Jenkins (2004:34) explained the far-reaching impact of convergence:

Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences. Convergence refers to a process, but not an endpoint.

Convergence can be described using the words cornucopia (abundance of information), choice (debates about whether the abundance of content would lead to more choice), crisis (as technology developed, the Post Office, for example, faced a crisis as people now send e-mails instead of letters), and interactivity (Briggs & Burke, 2005:217). As a result of convergence, the media will be omnipresent and different media will become increasingly intertwined (Jenkins, 2004:34). For example, radio stations also broadcast online by means of satellite, or print publications such as newspapers also publish digital editions.

Quoting Boorstin's 1978 book, entitled *The Republic of Technology*, convergence is explained as "different societies and cultures which started their historical journeys separately were now said to be travelling together on the same 'information super-highway'" (Briggs & Burke, 2005:216). An information economy, which is intricately linked to the abundance of information as a result of technological convergence, has been defined as follows (Cunningham et al., 1998:13):

...marked by a shift away from employment in producing raw materials, manufactured goods and tangible economic services towards employment directly related to the collection, processing and dissemination of data/information/knowledge and associated with an exponential increase in the volume and availability of information.

Convergence is concerned with the digitisation of information, media content and various interactive services (Fourie, 2001:114) and impacts on the way consumers use media (Jenkins, 2004:34). However, the speed of convergence will vary within society as richer

people will often become the early adapters of technology, whereas poor people often do not have, or cannot afford, access to technology (Jenkins, 2004:35). In addition to the new media production, distribution and access method, convergence also has social and legal implications (Fourie, 2001:115).

“Convergence is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process” as media companies are using content across numerous mediums and consumers are empowered to interact more with the media (Jenkins, 2004:37).

However, while convergence has advantages such as opportunities for media conglomerates to use content across various mediums and thereby extend market reach, it also poses the risk of market fragmentation and media have to re-evaluate the needs of their respective audience to avoid losing them (Jenkins, 2004:37).

Converged media poses potential risks for traditional media in terms of competition from online sources and traditional media fear cannibalisation of their audience (for example, newspaper readers may now opt to get their news online) as the nature of the media and media consumption has changed radically (Cunningham et al., 1998:14, 15). Despite widespread fears of cannibalisation as a result of convergence, it has been noted that a medium’s content may shift, the target audience may differ, and the social status might diminish, but if the medium continues to appeal to a basic human demand, it will continue to co-exist in conjunction with the new media (Jenkins, 2006:14).

This research study was conducted within the theoretical framework of technological convergence because convergence pertains to the development of digital technology and the digitisation of media content, which are key factors affecting this study. According to Jenkins (2006:2), convergence also focuses on the fusion of old and new media, and this is critical for this research assignment, which aims to analyse the impact of the new (specifically the Internet, in this instance) media on traditional (specifically magazines for this study) media as consumers are reportedly migrating online.

### 3.6 Globalisation theories

Various social, economic, cultural and political theories exist pertaining to globalisation (Fourie, 2001:594). The term globalisation – widely used as from the 1960s (Waters, 1995:2) – relates to the world becoming smaller figuratively as a result of technological developments and “the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992:8).

The notion of a so-called “global village” with a global consciousness about other cultures and issues was first introduced by Marshall McLuhan in 1960 (Robertson, 1992:8). McLuhan’s research, which had a substantial impact on media trends, also introduced the concept that the world is becoming figuratively smaller and more compressed (Robertson, 1992:8).

McLuhan could have been the first researcher to observe that (Waters, 1995:12):

the “industrial” media, transportation and money are being displaced by electronic media that can restore the collective culture of tribalism but on an expansive global scale.

Robertson (1992:130) succinctly described globalisation as “the universalization of particularism”. Globalisation can be defined as (Waters, 1995:5):

A social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly.

One of the characteristics of globalisation is that it is “an all-encompassing phenomenon involving economic, political, technological and cultural transformation” (Fourie, 2001:599).

As a result of globalisation, media is able to produce “faster, more extensive, interdependent forms of worldwide exchange, travel and interaction” (Fourie, 2001:604).

Globalisation promotes “ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity within nation-states” (Curran & Park, 2000:6). This means, for example, that as a result of digital technology people can watch a documentary on television or via a website such as YouTube; meaning that globalisation makes the world “smaller” and exposes people to different cultures (Curran & Park, 2000:6).

Although various theories on globalisation exist – produced by theorists such as Waters (1995) and Giddens (1990, 1999) – this researcher decided British sociologist Anthony Giddens’ theory of globalisation (Fourie, 2001:595) is the most relevant for purposes of this research study.

As is the case with all theories, Giddens’ theory received criticism, but it is nonetheless still the most relevant for this study because it concentrates specially on the role of information in society, and is therefore the framework within which to conduct this study.

### **3.6.1 Giddens’ theory of globalisation**

British sociologist Anthony Giddens explained globalisation as (Giddens, 2003:12, 13):

...a complex set of processes, not a single one. And these operate in contradictory or oppositional fashion. Most people think of globalisation as simply “pulling away” power of influence from local communities and nations into the global arena. And indeed this is one the consequences. ... Yet it also has an opposite effect. Globalisation not only pulls upwards, but also pushes downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy. ... Globalisation is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world.

Giddens, as extensively discussed in Fourie (2001:595), provided the following definition

for globalisation:

...a social process involving a growing number of people all over the world whose lives are affected on a daily basis by disembedded organisations, in other words not local or national organisations. The disembedded organisations that increasingly affect our lives can range from international financial, political, governmental, educational and cultural organisations, to media organisations that provide us with information and entertainment which, in turn, contribute to our perceptions and understanding of reality and the world.

Giddens maintained that globalisation was established at the same time as modernisation, which involved major changes in major institutional complexes, namely administrative power, industrialisation, Capitalism and Militarism as a result of time-space distantiation (Fourie, 2001:595, 596). “Globalisation lies behind the expansion of democracy” (Giddens, 2003:5).

Giddens’ theory of globalisation distinguishes between early modernity and late modernity, the latter a defining feature of globalisation, and noted that disembedding and disembedment are also defining traits of globalisation (Fourie, 2001:597, 598). For purposes of this research study, the “disembedded organisation” in question is a media organisation which comprises content and advertising that will inform, educate and entertain readers.

Two types of disembedment exist, namely the introduction of universally accepted tokens (for example, instead of bartering as in ancient times, money is the universally accepted “token” for payment), and more trust in, and dependence on, expert systems (for example, people are becoming increasingly reliant on technology, or trust expert opinion such as medical scientists) (Fourie, 2001:597).

Giddens noted that the fact that the previously unknown term “globalisation” has been adopted in recent years and used worldwide is in itself a testament to the globalisation

phenomenon (Fourie, 2001:595). “The term ‘globalisation’ has itself become ever more globalised. There can be few quasi-technical words that have achieved such wide currency” (Giddens, 2003:xii).

“Communication technology and systems play a central role in globalisation” as technology has drastically changed the way we use media (Fourie, 2001:600). Globalisation therefore does not only pertain to things happening at a distance or remotely, but also impacts on more private and personal aspects of people’s lives (Giddens, 2003:12).

As a result of rapid technological convergence, new media has the potential to reach a mass audience and its reach increases each time technology advances (Fourie, 2001:600).

According to Giddens, one of the key features of globalisation is the development of the culture industry, which as a result of burgeoning media, has led to the information and knowledge society (Fourie, 2001:598). Globalisation creates new economic and cultural zones within and across nations (Giddens, 2003:13).

One of the biggest concerns regarding globalisation is the fear that it will further widen the gap between the so-called haves (affluent groups) and the have-nots (poorer communities), developed and developing countries, or people with access to technology and those without, as communication advances (Fourie, 2001:593).

People without access to information or technology – whether for financial, socio-economical or technological (lack of access to a computer or broadband) – can become sidelined by globalisation (Fourie, 2001:598). Therefore, one of the paradoxes of globalisation is that it can pose a threat to minority groups or cultures, but it can also create the chance to promote the beliefs and cultures of certain minority groups. Globalisation can also be viewed as Westernisation or Americanisation, Giddens noted (Fourie, 2001:599).

As a result, there has also been resistance to globalisation, or what some researchers have referred to as one-world, global homogeneity or cosmopolitanism (Robertson, 1992:10).

Globalisation theories are not without flaws, and elicit criticism about the use of it as a framework to analyse empirical events or data. Giddens (2003:9) noted critics' comments about globalisation:

The notion of globalisation, according to the skeptics, is an ideology put about by free-marketeers who wish to dismantle welfare systems and cut back on state expenditures.

Bryant and Jary (1997:3) quoted numerous researchers to list some of the criticism leveled against Giddens' theory, namely that it "lacks guidelines for empirical research", the theory may have "over-reacted" about problems within Marxism, and it deals too superficially with certain elements and lacks structure.

Another criticism of the globalisation theory is that it undermines the uniqueness and continued existence of diverse civilisations such as East Asian, the Southeast Asian Buddhist, the Indian, the Islamic and the Western or global heterogeneity (Robertson, 1992:131). Because globalisation seems to be positively affecting rich countries and particularly countries in power, such as the USA, it is to be regarded as "destroying local cultures, widening world inequalities and worsening the lot of the impoverished" (Fourie, 2001:601). Globalisation is not basically about the "objectiveness of increasing interconnectedness" and contemporary globalisation should involve increased global complexity and density (Robertson, 1992:183, 188).

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the relevant theoretical frameworks, namely the theory of media evolution (incorporating the diffusion of innovation theory and convergence) and Giddens' theory of globalisation, which informed this study. The



theory of media evolution, which incorporates the diffusion of innovation theory and convergence, is the key theoretical framework included because these two theories pertain to the introduction and consumption of new media such as the Internet. The diffusion of innovation theory concentrates on developments in the media (such as the introduction of online counterparts for print publications, which is useful for this research study), and how consumers adopt and embrace these changes. The convergence theory will be used to determine how the digitisation of content results in different mediums (namely magazines and the Internet) becoming more and more integrated as numerous magazines launch online counterparts to remain relevant and competitive. At the same time, convergence increases competition for audience, creating the fear that new media will lead to declining circulation figures and declining advertising revenue.

Giddens' theory of globalisation provides a way to explain the social process of disembedded organisations, namely the media, that affects consumers, as well as the editorial content and advertising that will have an impact on their perception of reality. Technology dramatically changes the way people consume media (for example, people are no longer confined to reading media content produced within their geographical region but can now read overseas publications on the Internet, and this can lead to audience fragmentation, declining circulation and advertising figures for local magazines), and therefore the globalisation theory was deemed relevant for this study.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, outlines the research design and methodology, and provides details of the data collection process, the sample design chosen, sample size and also discusses potential data collection errors.

## **Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters focused on the outline of the research study, and comprised contextual information, a comprehensive literature review and theoretical frameworks within which to conduct the study. This chapter merges the theory and empirical field research, and outlines and explains the chosen research method:

Bridging the gap between the conceptualisation of research problems and the actual measurement of such communication problems, effects, trends and/or messages in operation, requires a conscious integration of theory and research (Du Plooy, 1997:ix).

The research design can be defined as “a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically” (Kumar, 2005:84). It details how the study will be conducted, specifying how the data will be collected, captured and analysed:

A traditional research design is a blueprint or detailed plan for how a research study is to be completed – operationalising variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest to study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses, and analysing the results (Thyer, as cited in Kumar, 2005:84).

Du Plooy (1997:38), citing Guy, Edgley, Arafat and Allen, defined research design as the “plan of procedures for data collection and analysis that are undertaken to evaluate a particular theoretical perspective”.

The purpose of a research design can be sub-divided into two categories, namely identifying or developing procedures and logistical preparations required to conduct the study, and then checking these procedures in terms of quality control to ensure their

validity, objectivity and accuracy (Kumar, 2005:84).

## **4.2 Data collection methods**

Data sources can be divided into four main categories, namely observation, self-reporting, archival sources and physical sources (Mouton, 2001:99).

There are certain key components that influence how the research will be conducted, namely (Maxwell, 2005:4):

- the nature of the research problem being studied
- the goal or purpose of the research study
- the theoretical framework within which the study is conducted
- the appropriate techniques or methods used in a research setting, and
- validity.

Because the research design influences the findings or outcome of the study, careful consideration needs to be given to factors such as the underlying theory, the study design, access to organisations and respondents, the degree of control over the social system being studied, type of data available, temporal dimension, study sample, sample size, data source, and data gathering method (Miller & Salkind, 2002:18).

In human sciences, measuring instruments can include questionnaires, observations, interviews or psychological tests (Mouton, 2001:100). A comprehensive, self-administered questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate research design to gather the qualitative data required for this study.

The statistics were obtained by accessing publicly available data and archival sources such as website traffic statistics, magazine circulation figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) and Nielsens NetRatings, among others.

#### **4.2.1 Fieldwork practices**

The self-administered questionnaire (see Addendum B) contained an introduction to inform potential respondents about the nature and scope of the research topic.

The questionnaire comprised a combination of direct and indirect open-ended questions of a specific nature. Specific questions were asked in an attempt to eradicate vague responses, but these were still open-ended questions so that respondents could express their opinion on the research topic in detail (Du Plooy, 1997:133). Great effort was made with the wording of the questions and types of questions asked to eradicate any confusion or ambiguity which would affect the validity of the data (Du Plooy, 1997:132). To ensure that the right types of questions were asked and that the questions were correctly worded (Du Plooy, 1997:132), the questionnaire was first tested on a couple of random researchers and revised to iron out any problems before giving it to respondents to complete. The questions were structured to ensure that answers could be compared across respondents and settings (Maxwell, 2005:80). The questions were structured, meaning that the questionnaire contained exact, standardised questions so that the responses could be easily encoded, transcribed and analysed (Du Plooy, 1997:145). The questions were therefore worded exactly the same and were ordered in the same sequence.

Potential respondents – discussed in more detail under the heading Sample Design – were emailed directly, requesting their participation in the research study. The body of the email provided the necessary background information, outlining the nature and purpose of the research study, and the questionnaire was included as an attachment. See Addendum B for an example of the research questionnaire. The necessary ethical clearance for this exercise as a whole was obtained according to the regulations of Stellenbosch University.

Some respondents – about 30 percent of the sample, requested a face-to-face interview as opposed to completing the self-administered questionnaire. These interviews – conducted in the interviewee's office at work – were based on the same set of questions. Answers

for the interviews were transcribed verbatim.

If potential respondents failed to respond or declined to participate, the researcher either sent a follow-up email requesting their participation again, or provided more detailed information about the study to encourage participation. Where responses were elicited, the researcher thanked respondents for their time and effort.

The data was then analysed to find structure in the data. Data analysis refers to “breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships” in order to “understand the various constitutive elements” of the data (Mouton, 2001:108). The data was analysed by means of testing hypothesis, and graphs and tables were also used to show relationships between the variables.

The data was then interpreted by means of formulating hypothesis to explain the trends and patterns observed, and applying these to the theoretical frameworks within which this study is conducted to see whether they are supported or falsified (Mouton, 2001:109).

#### **4.2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the data collection method**

Because the same questionnaire was emailed to all the participants (and put in person to those who preferred an interview), this form of data collection is advantageous because it tends to be more objective than other methods (Milne, 1999:n.p.). Another advantage of a research questionnaire is that it is a quick method of data collection and can be distributed easily and cheaply to any sample size.

One of the disadvantages of a self-administered questionnaire is that the researcher is not involved, which means that if a respondent does not correctly or comprehensively answer a question, the researcher cannot prompt or elicit a better answer by means of asking a follow-up question, as in the case of interviews.

Respondents are more likely to refuse participation or may simply not respond to the self-

administered questionnaire as they often find it too time-consuming to complete. (Therefore, in order to save time or be spared from the hassle of having to complete the self-administered questionnaire, some respondents requested an interview instead.) Another disadvantage of a self-administered questionnaire is that respondents might respond superficially to lengthy questions, therefore, the researcher should not ask too many questions (Milne, 1999:n.p).

One of the advantages of the interview is that the researcher is present, unlike as is the case with the self-administered questionnaire, and therefore able to obtain more detailed, accurate responses to questions – even contentious questions (Du Plooy, 1997:114). Some of the disadvantages of interviews are that participants might not be telling the truth, the researcher must have good listening skills, and must be wary of non-verbal communication which could influence the interviewees' responses (Du Plooy, 1997:114). Interviews can also be difficult to transcribe, code and analyse (Du Plooy, 1997:114).

Open-ended questions could generate a very detailed response, making it very time-consuming to capture (Milne, 1999:n.p.). This data can also be open to numerous interpretations, thereby increasing the chances that errors can occur when analysing the data.

#### **4.2.3 Potential data collection errors or shortcomings**

As the researcher is not present with the self-administered questionnaire to probe for more detailed answers as in the case with a face-to-face interview, it is important to carefully consider the research questions asked, the way the questions are worded and how the questionnaire is formatted (Du Plooy, 1997:132). The researcher ensured that the questions were asked in a logical sequence by using the funnel pattern (starting with general questions, followed by specific and then detailed questions), and that similar questions were grouped together.

A combination of direct and indirect questions, and specific questions were asked. In an

attempt to encourage respondents to discuss the questions in detail, open-ended questions were asked. It must however be noted that some respondents are reluctant to discuss or explain their answer in detail, which means the open-ended question can pose a problem in this instance. Effort was made to ensure that the questionnaire, although comprehensive, was not too long as this has a negative impact on the quality of the responses.

Many respondents do not answer all the questions, which means there might be missing values when capturing the data. The researcher tried to combat this problem by following up with respondents to get the missing answers.

To avoid confusion for respondents and errors when capturing the data, the researcher avoided double-barrelled questions (Du Plooy, 1997:137). Double-barrelled questions usually contain the words “or” or “and”, which means that two questions have been formulated and the researcher will have difficulty accurately determining which part of the question the respondent has answered (Du Plooy, 1997:137). The researcher also avoided other problematic wording of questions such as vague questions, loaded language, leading questions, presumptive questions, sensitive or threatening questions, and complex questions, among other things (Du Plooy, 1997:138, 139).

The researcher also took care with fictitious constructs, meaning that people who have no knowledge on the research topic were not asked to participate in this study. The sample size – which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter – can also be listed as a potential shortcoming if the sample size selected is too small (Mouton, 2001:101).

The researcher did not communicate any research expectancy effect to ensure that respondents were not subtly influenced before completing the questionnaire.

### **4.3 Sample design**

One can concur with Du Plooy who stated “[s]ampling refers to following rigorous

procedures when selecting individual units of analysis from a larger population” (1997:49).

Due to various research constraints such as time, for example, it was not possible to collect data from the entire population of print publications which have website counterparts, therefore this study was narrowed down to focus on a population comprising specific South African consumer magazines. The representative research sample comprises management from a diverse combination of consumer titles to give a holistic insight on the impact of magazines’ websites on their print counterparts.

A non-probability sample – “the sample does not represent the population, because each unit of the population does not have an equal chance of being selected” (Du Plooy, 1997:61) – was selected by the researcher, based on the nature of the study and time and financial constraints.

As a result of working in the media industry for a number of years, the researcher had previous knowledge of the population and, on this basis, decided which media to include for the purposive or judgement sample (Du Plooy, 1997:62). One of the advantages associated with the purposive sample is that the units selected were qualified to provide sufficient information on the research topic, and it is convenient as the researcher could select units that were Western-Cape based.

The non-probability research sample selected by the researcher comprised Media24’s outdoor magazine *Weg!* and its English counterpart *go!*, Associated Magazines women’s titles, namely *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*, and New Media Publishing lifestyle titles, namely *Visi* and *Taste*. These titles were selected as they represent three of the biggest media houses in the Western Cape. The publications also differ vastly in terms of content (content ranges from travel to home décor), which will hopefully be able to provide insight regarding the type of content people prefer reading online.

In addition to the editors and publishers of the diverse range of afore-mentioned



publications, professionals who are considered forerunners or leaders in terms of heading up digital publishing divisions of the largest publishing houses in the Western Cape were selected as they would be able to provide data pertaining to the most recent statistics and publishing trends.

The research questionnaire was emailed to the following people:

- Julia Raphaely – managing director of Associated Magazines (the stable's women's titles *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* were selected to be included in this research study)
- Bun Booyens – founding editor of *Weg!* magazine, former editor-in-chief of Media24's travel titles (*Weg!* and *go!* were selected to be included in this research study), currently editor of *Die Burger*
- Leonora Redelinghuys – digital head of Media24 Magazines' Central Digital Division
- Hélène Lindsay – New Media Publishing's digital director (two of the stable's lifestyle titles, namely *Visi* and *Taste*, were selected to be included in this research study)
- Craig Sims – former managing director of Atoll Media (publishers of *Saltwater GIRL* and *Zigzag*).
- An industry leader at Caxton declined to participate in this study
- An industry leader at Avusa Media, formerly named Johnnic Communications, declined to participate in this study.

The parameters of the population, the sample size and the standard error of measurement are factors which can influence the accuracy of the research sample (Stacks & Hocking, as cited in Du Plooy, 1997:51). These factors were all taken into account by the researcher and a homogenous population was selected which requires a smaller sample size (Du Plooy, 1997:51) and delivers quality responses as opposed to quantity, in order to ensure an accurate research sample.

#### **4.4 Reliability of data collected**

Reliability means that the “measure must be stable and must consistently produce the same measurements over a period of time” (Du Plooy, 1997:71).

To ensure consistency of measure and the highest possible reliability coefficient, the same research questionnaire was emailed to all potential respondents. This implies that if the consistency were to be tested by means of test-retest reliability, another researcher could administer the same questionnaire to the same sample and should get the same or similar responses.

However, two factors can negatively influence the reliability rate, namely respondents can simply repeat their initial answers during the test or respondents can change their opinions as time progresses (Du Plooy, 1997:72).

With regards to data obtained regarding website traffic statistics and print magazine circulation figures, the researcher assumes that these figures are correct as this data is audited or verified by independent sources such as Nielsens NetRatings, the Online Publishers’ Association and the Audit Bureau of Circulations respectively. The data is also assumed to be correct as publications use this same data to calculate the cost of their advertising space.

#### **4.5 Validity of data collected**

Measurement validity can be defined as “the degree to which the measurement we use actually measures what we intend or claim to have measured” (Du Plooy, 1997:75).

Validity and reliability are intricately linked because if a measure is valid, it is also by implication reliable, and “a measure cannot be valid unless it is also reliable” (Du Plooy, 1997:75).

Wimmer and Dominick defined construct validity as

relating a measuring instrument to some overall theoretic framework to ensure that the measurement is actually logically related to other concepts in the framework (as cited in Du Plooy, 1997:76).

Upon conclusion of this study, the researcher will determine validity by measuring the data against the theoretical frameworks previously outlined, and testing these against the hypotheses formulated.

#### **4.6 Data capturing and editing**

It is possible that human error can creep in when the data is being captured or transcribed (Mouton, 2001:109).

With qualitative data, risks exist that the answers can be open to interpretation or have multiple meanings, making it difficult to capture in a simple yet structured manner. Open-ended questions in particular can pose coding problems.

If a large number of respondents decline or fail to complete the self-administered questionnaires, the researcher is faced with the problem of too many missing values, and will have to follow up with potential respondents, encouraging everyone to complete the questionnaires.

When capturing the data, the research will aim to keep errors to a minimum while upholding the maximum standards in terms of validity and reliability.

#### **4.7 Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis transforms “meaningless” facts and figures into common trends or patterns relating to the hypotheses formulated (Mouton, 2001:109).

The purpose of data analysis is:

to understand the various constitutive elements of one's data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data (Mouton, 2001:108).

All fieldwork is concluded with the analysis and interpretation of the data captured and this data is categorised based on themes, patterns or common trends (Mouton, 2001:108).

Once the data collected has been captured and edited, the data will be analysed to examine whether the theoretical frameworks are supported by the new data.

The researcher will ensure that the data interpretation is not biased by factors such as selectivity.

#### **4.8 Research ethics**

It is imperative to take ethical issues, as well as moral and legal standards, into consideration when undertaking a research study (Du Plooy, 1997:45).

Ethics involve the assessment, based on "moral" values, of courses of action, directed by individual, social and cultural values and experiences. Values are the ideas and beliefs that members of a society share about what is important, good or bad, right or wrong (Du Plooy, 1997:45).

Theorist Thomas Cooper listed three universal values, namely "the search for truthfulness, responsibility (with subthemes of loyalty, professionalism and accountability) and freedom of expression" (Krüger, 2004:11, 12).

Krüger (2004:3) quoted US ethicist Louis Day's four reasons why ethics is necessary:

- ethics serve society's need for stability and gives people a guideline within which trust can be developed,
- ethics serve a need for a moral hierarchy,
- it helps to resolve conflict, and
- helps to clarify values.

When conducting social research, especially communication research, ethics can be divided into two categories, namely:

- the protection of the rights of human subjects, and
- the ethics of writing (Du Plooy, 1997:45).

In terms of the human subjects approached for the research sample, informed consent was obtained and the subjects were given the freedom of choice to participate or not without being forced or coerced. Research subjects were also guaranteed that the research findings would not be misused in any way.

Du Plooy (1997:46) listed the ethics of writing:

Contraventions of ethical standards of conduct in research include plagiarism, tampering with and misrepresenting data, concealing information, and the distortion and fabrication of data.

The researcher has upheld the ethics of writing by correctly crediting all sources used, striving for objectivity to prevent bias from affecting research results and presenting all the facts without tampering with the data.

Lastly, this research study was also conducted according to the stipulations of the Stellenbosch University's ethical clearance policy.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter comprised a detailed exposition of the data collection, focusing on aspects such as the research design chosen for data collection, and how the data will be captured and analysed.

It also explained the rationale behind the sample size selected, discussed the validity and reliability of the data and outlined potential data errors.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, comprises a comprehensive explanation of the data collected and highlights patterns pertaining to the hypotheses of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Results: Presentation and discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters focused on the outline of the research study, and comprised contextual information, a comprehensive literature review, the theoretical frameworks within which to conduct the study and detailed the research design and methodology.

This chapter documents the results of the data collected for purposes of investigating and answering the research question, namely

Magazines and their online counterparts: how magazine websites compete or complement the print publication in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

This chapter will document the research results obtained, and explain the main findings by relating the data to the research hypothesis, and highlighting any interesting statistics and findings.

The findings will be presented according to the foci of the study, namely

- circulation figures,
- advertising income, and
- editorial content

as it was established at the outset of this research that a magazine can essentially be divided into these three core sections (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2008:391).

As discussed in the initial chapters of this research study, the two mediums – magazines and their companion websites – can either work together in a “complementary fashion” (Ekron, 2009:1), or websites will eventually obviate the need for print publications.

Therefore, based on the research findings obtained and taking the key foci into account, conclusions will be drawn and the research question answered.

## **5.2 Data collected**

As comprehensively detailed in the previous chapter, Chapter 4, the data was collected by means of an emailed self-administered research questionnaire or, on request by the respondents, an interview based on the same set of questions. The study was initiated in 2007 when many magazines were still in the process of launching companion websites; hence most of the sources were interviewed at that critical stage. Even though the data then also dates back to 2007, the data is still relevant in the present media climate as the same concerns regarding new media developments prevail.

The research questionnaire – Addendum B – was structured according to the key foci of the study, so the questions were grouped in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

The researcher tried to solicit responses from a wide range of editors, publishers and media professionals who are considered experts on the research topic, because, if the sample size is too small, it can be considered a potential shortcoming of the research study (Mouton, 2001:101). However, some people declined to participate in the research study (these people mainly cited time constraints as the reason) or simply never responded to the request for assistance with the research study, despite repeated requests. The researcher also subsequently made an effort to encourage participation by offering to conduct a face-to-face interview, based on the same questions, and this elicited a couple more affirmative responses.

It was found that some respondents were too time-pressed to discuss their answers in detail, therefore sometimes giving a superficial response. Many respondents did not answer all the questions and the researcher then made every effort to follow up with respondents in an attempt to elicit more responses.



The following editors, publishers or media professionals participated in this research study:

- Julia Raphaely – managing director of Associated Magazines (the stable's women's titles *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* were selected to be included in this research study)
- Bun Booyens – founding editor of *Weg!* magazine, former editor-in-chief of Media24's travel titles (*Weg!* and *go!* were selected to be included in this research study), currently editor of *Die Burger*
- Leonora Redelinghuys – digital head of Media24 Magazines' Central Digital Division
- Hélène Lindsay – New Media Publishing's digital director (two of the stable's lifestyle titles, namely *Visi* and *Taste*, were selected to be included in this research study)
- Craig Sims – former managing director of Atoll Media (publishers of *Saltwater GIRL* and *Zigzag*).

Most of the participants completed those parts of the questionnaire that related to their specific fields of expertise, and answered those questions in detail, while other participants were able to offer a more generic, holistic perspective on the research topic.

Before documenting the research results, it is necessary to first outline which publications have an online presence, and how the print and online editions compare in terms of vital statistics.

**Table 1** *Statistics pertaining to the print and online activities of magazines included in the research survey (statistics as during time of finalising this study, namely August 2010).*

Publication	Circulation figures	Companion website	Unique users	Facebook page	Facebook fans	Twitter	Twitter followers
<b>Associated Magazines</b>							
<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	97 499 (Jan – March 2010, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.cosmopolitan.co.za/">http://www.cosmopolitan.co.za/</a>	22 741	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/CosmopolitanSA">http://www.facebook.com/CosmopolitanSA</a>	2 739	<a href="http://twitter.com/CosmopolitanSA">http://twitter.com/CosmopolitanSA</a>	2 600
<i>Marie Claire</i>	33 135 (Jan – March, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.marieclaire.co.za/">http://www.marieclaire.co.za/</a> (blog site)	1 120	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/MarieClaireSA">http://www.facebook.com/MarieClaireSA</a>	120	<a href="http://twitter.com/marieclaire_sa">http://twitter.com/marieclaire_sa</a>	496
<b>Media24 magazines</b>							
<i>Weg!</i>	88 673 (Jan – March 2010, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.weg.co.za/">http://www.weg.co.za/</a>	14 198	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/wegtydskrif">http://www.facebook.com/wegtydskrif</a>	6 614	No Twitter account	179
<i>Go!</i>	88 673 (Jan – March 2010, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.gomag.co.za">www.gomag.co.za</a>	2 523	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/wegtydskrif#!/gomagazineSA">http://www.facebook.com/wegtydskrif#!/gomagazineSA</a>	718	No Twitter account	1 012
<b>New Media Publishing</b>							
<i>Visi</i>	12 097 (Jan – March 2010, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.visi.co.za">www.visi.co.za</a>	9 900	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cape-Town-South-Africa/VISI-magazine/240699156163?ref=search">http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cape-Town-South-Africa/VISI-magazine/240699156163?ref=search</a>	742	<a href="http://twitter.com/VISI_Mag">http://twitter.com/VISI_Mag</a>	986
<i>Taste</i>	31 398 (Jan – March 2010, Total Paid Circ, ABC)	<a href="http://www.tastemag.co.za/">http://www.tastemag.co.za/</a>	17 228	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/WoolworthsSA">http://www.facebook.com/WoolworthsSA</a>	18 641	<a href="http://twitter.com/woolworths_sa/">http://twitter.com/woolworths_sa/</a>	3 806

Sources: Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa, Associated Magazines website, Media24 website, Facebook, and Twitter

### 5.2.1 Focus 1: The impact of magazines' websites on circulation figures

The researcher aimed to determine how companion websites – with content that is usually available freely online – affect the circulation figures and subscription figures of the print publication.

Although research respondents were asked to evaluate the effect of the magazine's companion website on demand for the print publication, none of the respondents referred to the conversion rate measurement. The conversion rate is one method used to measure the success of a website and is calculated by dividing the total amount of sales or desired action by the amount of unique visitors (Jaffe, 2008:n.p.). While the average conversion rate is 2.4 percent globally, South African websites have a conversion rate of less than one percent (Jaffe, 2008:n.p.).

Increasing subscriptions for the print publication via the website can be tricky, as 75 percent of online users abandon their shopping carts for reasons that range from lack of clarity regarding returns, concerns over performing credit card transaction online and doubts pertaining to the website's credibility (Jaffe, 2008:n.p.).

All the respondents who participated in this research study were in agreement that one of the main purposes of the companion website was to encourage website users to subscribe to the print publication. There was also consensus that the companion website did not negatively impact on print circulation figures, but can rather be used strategically to improve the circulation figures.

Julia Raphaely, managing director of Associated Magazines (which publishes titles such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *House and Leisure* and *O The Oprah Magazine*), stated that companion websites are an "important driver of subscriptions" (Raphaely, 2007).

Heléne Lindsay, the digital director at New Media Publishing (which produces publications such as *Visi* and *Taste*), explained that websites are "not cannabilising" readers of the print publication, instead, they offer an opportunity for deep market penetration and brand awareness, as long as they also deliver what the print publication promises (Lindsay, 2007). However, the source stated it is difficult to quantify exactly to what extent websites assist with increasing print circulation figures (Lindsay, 2007).

According to Leonora Redelinghuys, the digital head of Media24 Magazines' Central

Digital Division, the companion website does “definitely not” impact negatively on the circulation of the print publication, provided that the online strategy differs from the print strategy (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Companion websites are the “cheapest and easiest place for acquiring new subscriptions” and therefore publishers try to ensure that it is quick and easy to subscribe online (Redelinghuys, 2010). While companion websites no doubt attract new audiences to buy the print publication, recent research on *Shape* magazine revealed that there was only a 30 percent overlap of readers buying both the print publication and visiting the website (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Craig Sims, the former Managing Director of Atoll Media (a branch of Touchline Media (Pty) Ltd), stated that unlike the perception internationally, in South Africa, the website is merely considered an extension of the print product (Sims, 2007). Therefore, while companion websites have numerous advantages such as encouraging better, more immediate interaction with the magazine’s target audience, they fail to significantly increase print magazine subscriptions, even though that is one of its primary aims (Sims, 2007).

The data collected therefore concurs with other research, such as Kaiser and Kongsted’s (2005:4) study, which established that “there is no robust statistical effect on total circulation” on the print publication if a companion website exists (see 2.3.1).

The fact that all the magazines included in this research survey encourage online users to subscribe to the print publication, also corresponds with Ellonen and Kuivalainen’s study (2005:5). Their study listed the main purpose of having a companion website as attracting new readers for the print publication (2005:5) (see 2.3.1). By means of browsing the sample selection’s respective companion websites, the researcher noted how subscriptions were encouraged:

- The *Cosmopolitan* website contains banner adverts prompting readers to

subscribe (*Cosmopolitan* website, 2010:n.p.). These adverts click through to a website ([www.magsathome.co.za](http://www.magsathome.co.za)) which processes the subscription transaction.

- The *Marie Claire* blog site contains adverts which links to a website ([www.magsathome.co.za](http://www.magsathome.co.za)) which processes the subscription transaction (*Marie Claire* blog, 2010:n.p.).
- The *Taste* website contains adverts encouraging readers to subscribe, which clicks through to a website that facilitates subscriptions to the print publication (*Taste* website, 2010:n.p.).
- *Weg! and go!* contain banner adverts at the top of their respective websites to encourage subscriptions, and each website also contains a dedicated hub to facilitate subscriptions (*Weg! and go! Website*, 2010:n.p.) In addition, *Weg!* and *go!* also have a “Subscriber Centre”, where online users can select from a number of options such as new subscriptions, renewing subscriptions, gift subscriptions, missing subscriptions and changing subscribers’ contact details.
- *Visi* contains a page with information about how to subscribe, plus all the relevant contact details and information about where to buy the magazine in the form of a list of stockists for all the provinces (*Visi* website, 2010:n.p.).

Based on the data collected, and previous research reviewed, it can be established that the companion website does not cannibalise the print publication’s audience. Therefore, when a publication’s circulation figures decline, this can be attributed to other factors (for example, reduced spending during the recession) rather than simply the companion website.

Some media professionals, who did not comprise the focused data collection for purposes of this study because they are not yet as highly regarded in the media industry, subscribe to an entirely different school of thought: instead of measuring whether companion websites adversely affect the print publication, publications should start with cross media measurement and include the website figures as part of the magazine’s overall circulation (Roper, 2009:n.p.).

### **5.2.2 Focus 2: The impact of magazines' websites on advertising income**

The researcher tried to ascertain how the existence of a companion website affects the advertising income of the print publication, especially considering that online advertising rates are in most cases cheaper than print advertising rates.

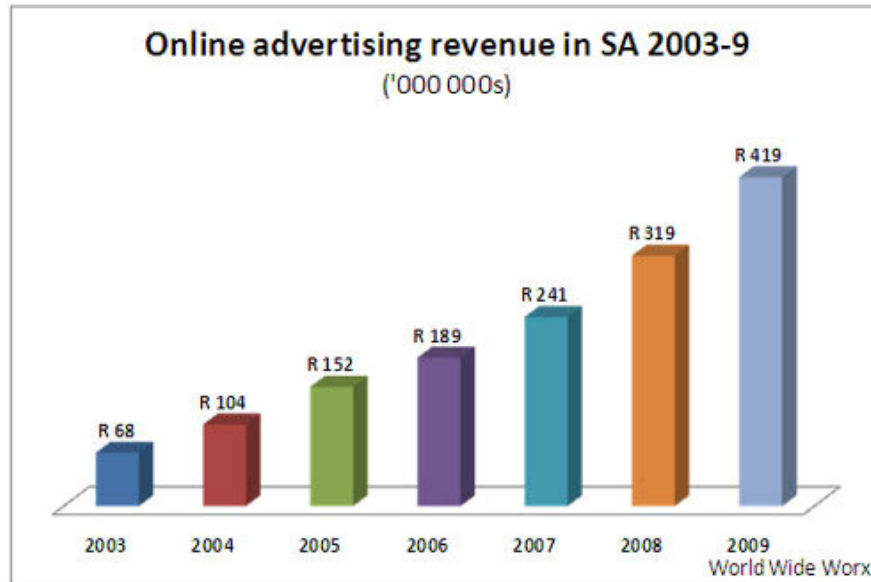
Respondents were asked to evaluate the effect that the companion website has on the advertising income of the print publication, and how they promoted cross advertising opportunities between the two mediums.

These questions were prompted by various research results published and statements made by media professionals, who were not included in the selection group for this study, as the study comprised a specific focus group, but are considered knowledgeable on the topic. One such statement was made by John Muszynski, chief investment officer at SMGX, a Starcom MediaVest unit:

Circulation will continue to be important because it's a valuable metric and benchmark for all marketers. However, as all the other media out there start to bring out more sophisticated, more precise targeting data and accountability metrics, the magazine industry needs to keep up (Ives, 2010:n.p).

Continuing in the same vein, the study entitled "Online Media in South Africa 2009", showed that online advertising is "growing vigorously" with advertisers becoming increasingly interested in promoting their products or services using this new medium (Bizcommunity, 2009:n.p). This study was conducted by World Wide Worx and the Online Publishers' Association, and stated that online advertising has the advantage over print in terms of measurability (measurement of advert impressions and click throughs) and demonstrable returns, making it appealing to advertisers (Bizcommunity, 2009:n.p.).

**Graph 1** *Growth of online advertising revenue in South Africa*



Source: Bizcommunity (2009:n.p.)

None of the research respondents quantified the impact that online advertising has on the print publication. Instead, they discussed the topic more generically.

Raphaely (2007) does not believe that companion websites will have a detrimental impact on print publications because “advertising in a magazine is more relevant than almost anywhere else”. Adverts in magazines are also more relevant to a specific target audience, the source stated (Raphaely, 2007).

Although online advertising is cheaper than print advertising rates, this is not causing advertisers to migrate online at the expense of print (Redelinghuys, 2010):

You don’t get the same reach online than you get in print. Your ads can look much richer in a printed environment. It’s definitely not a one or the other scenario. Digital is merely a part of the marketing strategy. So, if you decide on only spending on digital, we believe your marketing strategy is flawed.

Another source said magazines are one of the few mediums where advertising is actually welcomed and magazines deliver high profile consumers who are very loyal and enjoy spending money, she explained (Raphaely, 2007). Magazines are also invaluable as word-of-mouth promotion of products or services, therefore making them a perennially popular option for advertisers (Raphaely, 2007).

Instead of trying to dissuade advertisers to advertise online, Lindsay (2007) said their publications' sales teams are always on the lookout for additional online advertisers. Although online advertising is steadily increasing, publishers must aim to increase the online audience in order to offer a quality audience to advertisers, she noted (Lindsay, 2007).

Although Media24 has a dedicated team that sells digital advertising and mostly gets their revenue from digital agencies, they have a new centralised sales initiative, and are encouraging the print sales teams to educate their traditional agencies about the benefits of online advertising (Redelinghuys, 2010).

In contrast, Bun Booyens, the founding editor of *Weg!* and *go!* magazines and former editor-in-chief of Media24's travel titles, stated that advertisers are migrating online regardless. The predominant reason for this is that the advertising rates are more favourable in comparison to print, thereby also enabling smaller companies to promote their product or service cheaply by means of online listings or directories (Booyens, 2007).

A number of multimedia or cross-advertising opportunities exist and there are different measuring models, such as the most commonly used CPM (cost per thousand impressions), CPC (cost per click) and CPA (cost per action) (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:3, 4).

Because of the measurability of the web, you can see how your banner performs and change it on the fly. Digital should be seen as part of the marketing campaign



of an advertiser (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Redelinghuys (2010) believes that the companion website does not affect print advertising income at all because the money “does not come from the same budget”. “Advertisers usually have separate print and digital budgets, so now we are actually able to get more revenue from our advertisers” (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Advertisers are encouraged to opt for multimedia advertising packages (“full 360 degree advertising opportunities”) across all platforms for maximum impact (Redelinghuys, 2010).

The fact that print publications are in fact promoting online advertising corresponds with Novak and Hoffman’s research (1996:1), which was included in the literature review of the study (see 2.3.2). The reason why magazines are encouraging online advertising is because numerous websites are not yet commercially viable, and advertising is one of the main revenue sources (Novak & Hoffman, 1996:1).

Although Sims (2007) believed that a website can only be considered successful if it makes a profit, many businesses consider the website to be a brand extension and treat it as marketing. While Atoll Media’s websites are profitable, bandwidth restrictions and low Internet penetration in South Africa do impact negatively on the viability of the business model (Sims, 2007).

These statements tie in with Lindsay’s comment that in terms of ensuring that a website is commercially viable, revenue can be generated by means of online subscriptions, sponsorships, affiliate advertising or online advertising, although all these business models are “tough nuts to crack” (Lindsay, 2007).

Based on the data collected, it can therefore be deduced that a companion website does not adversely affect the advertising income of the print publication. In fact, the publication generates more revenue in total, thanks to cross-marketing opportunities

between the two mediums.

### **5.2.3 Focus 3: The impact of magazines' websites on editorial content**

The researcher aimed to determine how online publications – with content that is usually available freely online – affect the editorial content of the print publication.

Research respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of the companion website on the editorial content of the consumer magazine, and were also questioned regarding interactive features, restricted content online, interaction with readers and how frequently content should be updated online. Considering the nature of online, research respondents was also asked how online content is used in the print publication, and how editorial content from the print publication is repurposed for the web.

One respondent said “content is everywhere, mobile content is exploding and piracy is still an issue” (Raphaely, 2007). According to her,

[c]ontent is king, and equally important is powerful brands and good relationships with consumers. Editorial will drive the online strategy, and the editorial relationship with the readers is core to everything (Raphaely, 2007).

A companion website is simply another way to improve that relationship, she explained.

An important question that magazines need to ask themselves is whether they are in the magazine business or in the content business, as the latter can translate across numerous mediums, noted Raphaely (2007).

#### **5.2.3.1 Differences between print and online content**

Magazine content is “very indulgent” and magazines are considered a luxurious reward, not something people just skim-read, whereas the companion website gives a “quick

overview” of a topic and is geared towards speed (Lindsay, 2007).

The magazine and the Internet play different roles; therefore they are not in direct competition, believes Raphaely (2007). Magazines fulfil a more emotional need, whereas the Internet serves a more functional purpose (Raphaely, 2007). Although communication is no longer passive or linear, and power is being transferred from the editor to the readers, the good news is that readers want and need a good filter (Raphaely, 2007). According to this source, magazines still have the following advantages over online publications:

- consumers invite magazines into their lives;
- people “opt in” to magazines, not out of;
- magazines are portable and easy to use;
- people define themselves by the magazines they read;
- magazine publishers are at the forefront of innovative ways to “surround” the consumer;
- magazines deliver engagement and reach at the same time;
- magazines have experienced editorial teams;
- magazines can rely on the existing power of periodical brands; and
- magazines have ownership of content resources (Raphaely, 2007).

Fears that companion websites will obviate the need for a print publication are completely unfounded as the need for a “beautifully designed print publication” will always exist (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Unless they are doing research online, people do not set aside much time to read content online, they merely “pop in” or read an overview of the headlines and then move on, Lindsay (2007) noted, explaining that consuming content online differs greatly from that of the print publication.

Therefore, the presentation of the content and writing style also differs greatly between

the two mediums: print allows for longer, detailed articles while a website is better suited for bite-sized articles, interactive graphics, clear sections (content hubs), descriptive headings and a short synopsis of an article (Lindsay, 2007).

Booyens (2007) also stated that information published online must differ from print, and have punchier headlines (with suitable keywords for search engine optimisation) and formatting such as bullet points must be used to encourage easier reading (Booyens, 2007). Online content therefore tends to be more superficial, he noted.

People used to print out e-mails, but even though consumers are more comfortable with reading and absorbing online content, publishers must not try to squeeze articles originally appearing in the print publication into an online format (Lindsay, 2007). It is important to create content specifically for the platform that it will be consumed on, and not simply replicate the same content across all platforms (Redelinghuys, 2010). Although content from the print publication is repurposed for the web, the content is optimised in terms of it being shorter, punchier and more search engine friendly (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Print definitely has a tactile advantage, whereas the web is at an advantage in terms of the power of refined search and archiving capabilities (Booyens, 2007).

#### **5.2.3.2 Generating content ideas**

Publishers believe that the companion website is a good opportunity to do research for future content for the print publication, and often use the website or social networking audiences to interactively either brainstorm ideas for new content, get more content on a specific topic, get comments on published editorial or to find out what content readers would find interesting (Redelinghuys, 2010).

Booyens (2007) supported this statement, explaining that readers value the online exchange of information as readers want information about someone else's travel

experiences. Travel magazines are purveyors of information, and could signify the end of the traditional travel guidebook, he added. Information obtained from fellow target audience members is considered to be much more honest, and serves the same function basically as a research focus group (Booyens, 2007). Publishers and editors are able to garner high-quality feedback from the forums and generate good ideas for future feature articles, the source explained (Booyens, 2007).

Publishers also use their digital platforms to tell people about the interesting content that will be featured in the next edition of the print magazine. Websites offer interactive, value-added content such as videos, galleries, slide shows and comment facilities. “Instead of having to wait for the next edition to come out in a month’s time, they can get great content throughout the month” (Redelinghuys, 2010).

#### **5.2.3.3 The issue of restricted or paid content**

Consumer behaviour is changing: from print to screen, from offline to connected, and from mass to specialty, which means new business models are needed, noted Raphaely (2007).

In terms of the “closed” or paid content website model, Redelinghuys (2010) believes that it depends entirely on the editorial – if users are able to get the content elsewhere, they will not pay to access a website. Redelinghuys (2010) explained:

They will not pay for content, but they will pay for content wrapped around an application layer. So, take all our recipes and make them searchable. And then give users the ability to find recipes based on what they feel like eating. And then give them the ability to buy the products they don’t have online. Now that they will pay for, but not just plain content.

Some of the other respondents disagreed with this sentiment. There is still no market to sell content online: “it’s proven itself to be a failed model” (Sims, 2007).

Sims (2007) estimated that about 75 percent of the print publication's readers also accessed content online, simply for the reason that the website was offering the same content as the print publication, but is available freely online.

Booyens (2007) agreed:

People do not want to pay for content online. All the same content is available elsewhere. No magazine will make a profit if the same content is readily available elsewhere.

However, publishers could make a profit if content is sold in bundles so the consumer gets highly personalised information (Booyens, 2007). People do seem willing to pay for an SMS, so publishers may be able to monetise their new media activities through handheld devices (Booyens, 2007).

Publishers cannot afford to continue to give content away for free, but consumers are reluctant to pay for content online, so there first needs to be a mindset change in this regard before a successful model can be devised for closed websites, where consumers need to pay to access content (Lindsay, 2007).

#### **5.2.3.4 Frequency of online content updates**

In terms of how frequently the website should be updated, the verdict was virtually unanimous. A successful website should be updated daily (Redelinghuys, 2010):

People want to every day go to a site and see something new. It's like buying the paper in the morning and having exactly the same news as yesterday. People will stop buying the paper very quickly.

Sims (2007) agreed that content needs to be updated frequently: the biggest upper hand

that the companion website has over its print counterpart is immediacy, therefore online should be updated daily to play into the strengths of the medium. Websites should contain current, real-time content which is frequently updated, although this can be challenging due to time or budget constraints, Lindsay (2007) added.

It is anticipated that the lowering of broadband restrictions and subsequent increased Internet usage will have a profound impact on content, making the online content completely different to the content offered in print (Sims, 2007). “When broadband arrives, it will be a totally different ballgame for publishers,” noted Booyens (2007). The biggest problem in South Africa is connectivity: once the country has truly cheap broadband, publishers will expand their reach exponentially (Redelinghuys, 2010; Sims, 2007).

Yet, “the two platforms will find their niche by playing to the strengths of their respective mediums” (Sims, 2007). Sims (2007) believed that the print publication and its online counterpart will not be in competition, but that “each platform will find a way of delivering content that suits their delivery platform”.

The data collected corresponds with research reviewed at the onset of this study (see 2.3.3), which stated that the two mediums can exist in symbiosis, provided that editors and publishers strategically select what they publish online and use the Internet’s strengths to their advantage (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:10).

#### **5.2.4 Concluding comments and final findings**

Sound advice when creating an online strategy is to have a “good blueprint with an eraser at hand” as many publications are still experimenting to see what works (Raphaely, 2007). Fixed long-term strategies will be obsolete, therefore magazine publishers need to be agile and experiment and test new online strategies through focused investments, she noted (Raphaely, 2007).

Based on the data collected from research respondents, the following conclusions could be made based on the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- The circulation figures of print magazines will drop significantly if these publications launch a website counterpart as readers will migrate online.
- *Finding: The existence of a companion magazine website will not adversely affect the circulation of the print publication as print and online strategies differ, and consumers still enjoy the tactile experience of reading a print publication.*
- The magazine's online counterpart can be used strategically to increase the print publication's circulation figures.
- *Finding: The companion website can be used to increase the print publication as all publishers actively punt subscription offers online.*
- Magazine websites can offer multi-media, interactive advertising campaigns – the success of which can be accurately measured – at cheaper advertising rates, thereby potentially cannibalising the print publication's advertising revenue.
- *Finding: Although it is cheaper to advertise online and easier to measure campaign results, online advertising is not adversely affecting print advertising revenue as publications now offer multimedia advertising packages, and generate more money in many cases.*
- By offering free content on the magazine's website, plus additional interactive features such as forums, blogs, archives or newsletters, the print publication faces the risk of readers migrating online to avoid paying for content.
- *Finding: Despite the free content and interactive features offered online, consumers still want to read the print publication as it contains more in-depth content. Consumers consider reading a magazine a leisurely, indulgent experience whereas they use a website primarily for information gathering.*



### **5.2.5 Summary**

This chapter described and summarised the main research results obtained from the data collected for purposes of answering the research question posed in the title of the study. The results were grouped and discussed according to the key foci that comprise this study, namely circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

The following and final chapter, Chapter 6, will contain the conclusions that can be deduced from the research findings, as well as recommendations for further research on this same topic.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter will outline the conclusions based on the research study conducted, discuss any potential shortcomings of the data collected, make recommendations based on the research results and suggest topics that can be explored for further research.

### **6.2 Conclusion**

Based on the research conducted, the conclusions below – discussed according to the foci which underpinned this study, namely circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content – were drawn.

#### **6.2.1 Focus 1: The impact of magazines' websites on circulation figures**

The data collected during this research study indicated that one of the main purposes of the companion website is to increase the print publication's circulation figures and the number of print subscribers.

Research respondents believed that the website encourages new consumers to purchase the print publication and does not negatively affect circulation figures, provided that the publication's print and online strategies are different.

#### **6.2.2 Focus 2: The impact of magazines' websites on advertising income**

Although online advertising rates are cheaper and it is easier to measure the success of an online campaign in comparison to that in a print publication, based on the data collected, it is evident that advertisers are not migrating online to the detriment of print media. As the research respondents stated, advertisers are now employing a cross media approach to their marketing campaigns, instead of only advertising in one medium, as was done in the

past. Therefore, in many instances, publications are actually increasing their overall advertising income.

Research respondents were also in agreement that print advertising had a more profound impact, thanks to vivid graphics and beautiful page layout therefore, it is still an appealing medium to advertisers.

### **6.2.3 Focus 3: The impact of magazines' websites on editorial content**

According to the research respondents, the companion website was considered to have the advantage in terms of disseminating information to a wider audience, and also because it offers free, interactive, multimedia content to entice new consumers.

But, in terms of engrossing the reader, providing a tactile experience and a form of escapism thanks to its compelling editorial content, magazines trump their online counterparts, the respondents agreed. The companion website was considered to serve a functional purpose in the form of easy-to-retrieve archived material and quick access to information, while the magazine is considered a small luxury to be enjoyed during private time, the research respondents noted.

One of the main reasons for this is the way the content is presented: a print publication lends itself to lengthier articles, while website content is characterised by punchy headings and bite-sized text containing keywords for search engine optimisation.

### **6.2.4 Summary: Conclusion**

It can be concluded, based on the research conducted, that magazines which have a meticulously planned online strategy will not be cannibalised by their companion websites in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content.

Fears that companion websites would adversely impact on print publications, and

eventually lead to the demise of these publications, appear unfounded as it has been established that both mediums can exist in symbiosis. This concurs with information published by researchers such as Ekron (2009:71):

...despite the Internet's varied functional attributes the psychological disposition of its users may still be such that they prefer traditional media, such as magazines, to gratify certain media needs.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

There are a number of magazines that have not yet launched websites out of fear that the audience of the print publication will be cannibalised. It is recommended that all publications invest in an online presence as, if done correctly, it will not pose a direct threat to print, but, instead, empower the print publication to develop brand communities and create a dialogue with consumers, as evidenced by the research conducted.

However, before launching an online companion, magazines must first develop a well-researched online strategy which will ensure that there is no competition between the mediums and that the website will also generate revenue, as opposed to relying on the print publication to subsidise online activities, as is often the case. Online and mobile media is an essential part of the marketing mix and should therefore be integrated with traditional media.

#### **6.3.1 Focus 1: The impact of magazines' websites on circulation figures**

As was evidenced with the successful launch of the South African edition of *Women's Health* magazine in 2009, a publication need not first exist before launching an online counterpart. The website can first be created and it is recommended that it is used to generate brand awareness for the pending print publication and secure a loyal readership before the publication is even launched.

### **6.3.2 Focus 2: The impact of magazines' websites on advertising income**

Publications are also advised to offer multimedia packages or opportunities to advertisers because, in most instances, this actually helps to generate more revenue overall and does not merely eat away at the print revenue.

### **6.3.3 Focus 3: The impact of magazines' websites on editorial content**

While consumers may opt to get hard news and breaking news online because the main benefit of the Internet is immediacy, magazines provide a tactile reading experience which cannot easily be replicated or replaced online.

The web allows for interactivity (for example, video clips, photo galleries, comments from consumers and social media networking) that print does not facilitate, therefore publishers should provide consumers with these value-added features online. Publishers, editors or media professionals should also use other modern mediums (for example, social networking websites such as Twitter or Facebook), to promote the print publication.

## **6. 4 Potential shortcomings of the data collected**

Due to constraints such as time, coupled with the problem of poor responses, the research sample selected for inclusion in this study was limited. It is recommended that the study be conducted with a larger sample size to analyse results across a broader spectrum of magazines for a more comprehensive and complete overview on the research topic.

Considering the poor response rate in many instances by the sample group selected, perhaps the research questionnaire should not be emailed at all, and interviews should all be conducted instead to ensure a higher response rate and combat the problem of missing data values.

## **6.5 Theoretical frameworks**

This research study was conducted within the theoretical frameworks of the theory of media evolution (incorporating convergence) and Giddens' theory of globalisation, as these were deemed most appropriate and are both applicable to media developments.

### **6.5.1 Theory of media evolution**

The theory of media evolution is relevant to this study as it is concerned with the introduction and adoption of technology, which has had a profound impact on the media landscape. The research data supports the anthropotropic theory of media evolution, which stipulates that media “eventually become human in their performance” as they facilitate communication (Levinson, 1997:xvi), because all the research respondents noted that new media provides numerous opportunities to connect directly and frequently with consumers that print does not.

Various researchers divided media evolution or media development into stages, such as birth or inauguration, defensiveness and market penetration. It can be deduced from this research study that media evolution in South Africa is in the adaptation or convergence stage, meaning that traditional media (print publications, in this instance) is adapting or merging with the new medium (the Internet) to retain its audience.

### **6.5.2 Giddens' theory of globalisation**

Anthony Giddens' theory of globalisation was deemed the most relevant globalisation theory for the purposes of this research study.

The fundamental concept of this theory is based on how media must adapt in the wake of technological developments in order to remain relevant (Fourie, 2001:600). Giddens defined globalisation as a social process involving an increasing number of people worldwide whose lives are affected by disembedded organisations (Fourie, 2001:595). The “disembedded organisations” for the purposes of this research study is the media

which affect people's lives by publishing content and advertising which affect their audiences' perceptions of reality.

As evidenced by the research results, new media has the ability to reach and interact with new audiences, providing them with a wealth of content and information.

One of the criticisms of globalisation is that it can lead to an even bigger rift between the so-called haves and have-nots, in this case people with access to technology and those without. Internet penetration in South Africa is still very low in comparison to that in developed countries, therefore one of the big problems is that due to socio-economic reasons, many people cannot afford access to the Internet. The research respondents believed that the introduction of cheap broadband will have a radical impact on online media consumption habits in South Africa in future.

## **6.6 Suggestions for further research**

Based on the information obtained from respondents during the research study, the following topics were identified as possibilities for further research. While this research study focused on the effect of companion websites on magazines in terms of circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content, each of these foci can individually form the basis of more in-depth research.

The research topics listed below are but a few possible examples for further developing research on this particular topic.

### **6.6.1 Focus 1: The impact of magazines' websites on circulation figures**

#### **Should magazine circulation be combined?**

Some media professionals believe that the circulation figures of the print publication and the number of unique visitors for the companion website should be combined. Research can be conducted to determine the advantages and disadvantages of this proposed new

metric system, and whether it is advisable going forward.

### **The impact of broadband on media consumption patterns in South Africa**

It is predicted that the imminent introduction of affordable broadband connectivity in South Africa will have a profound effect on Internet consumption in the country. As one respondent (Lindsay, 2007) noted, due to the socio-economic situation in South Africa, many people cannot afford access to the Internet. The impact of affordable broadband and its affect on media consumption patterns in South Africa, particularly traditional media once most people have access to the Internet, will be an interesting topic for research.

#### **6.6.2 Focus 2: The impact of magazines' websites on advertising income**

##### **How can online strategies be monetised?**

As the researchers noted, one of the biggest challenges for companion websites is to ensure that they are profitable. Many of these websites are largely subsidised by the print publication. It would make for an interesting research project to investigate new ways – apart from online advertising – to ensure that the website is commercially viable.

#### **6.6.3 Focus 3: The impact of magazines' websites on editorial content**

##### **How online strategies can be monetised in South Africa, considering that consumers are resistant to paying for content?**

The respondents included in this research study unanimously stated that consumers do not want to pay for content online. Websites often struggle to achieve their goal of becoming profitable. A few respondents provided some suggestions regarding how content could be repackaged to make it more marketable, but these comments really just scratched the surface of the issue. The need therefore exists for in-depth research as to what types of content or data bundles consumers will pay for and how common content can be successfully repurposed in order for websites to make a profit in this way.



**How have publications revised their content strategies, based on social and mobile media?**

How has social media, which incorporates blogs, social networks (for example, Facebook and Twitter), content-sharing platforms and mobile media changed traditional media's content strategies? As one of the respondents (Booyens, 2007) noted, the focus is starting to shift from whether online media will replace traditional media, to the migration of consumers – who want to access content anytime, anywhere – towards mobile media. Research can be conducted on how magazine editors and publishers can create a new business model, incorporating social and mobile media, to improve the publication's content.

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## **ADDENDUM A: Commonly used terminology**

### **Abbreviations and acronyms relevant to the study**

Below is a list and brief explanation of some of the most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms in this study:

**ABC:** Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa – The ABC is a non-profit organisation, based on an agreement between advertisers, advertising agencies and media, which checks circulation figures submitted to ensure they are accurate and truthful (Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa website, 2010:n.p.).

**ISP:** Internet Service Provider – An ISP is a company that provides consumers with access to the Internet by means of data transmission technology (Internet Service Providers' Association website, 2010:n.p.).

**MPASA:** Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa – The MPASA is a non-profit organisation made up of magazine publishers, which is tasked with addressing the needs and concerns of the magazine industry (comprising of customer, business-to-business and consumer publications) in South Africa (Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa website, 2010:n.p.).

**OPA:** Online Publishers' Association – The OPA is a forum which represents digital media and promotes websites as a favourable medium to audiences and advertisers, and tries to ensure that digital is a credible medium (Online Publishers' Association of South Africa website, 2010:n.p.).

**PPC:** Pay-Per-Click – This Internet advertising model requires advertisers to only pay the advertising rate when a website user clicks on a hyperlinked advertisement on the host website, and the link then redirects the user to the advertiser's website (also called the

target site) (Anupam, Mayer, Nissim, Pinkas & Reiter, 1999:1).

**SAARF:** South African Advertising Research Foundation – The SAARF is a non-profit organisation comprising marketers, advertisers and media professionals, and its aim is to publish details regarding media audiences and to measure traditional media audiences (South African Advertising Research Foundation website, 2010:n.p.).

**SEO:** Grappone and Couzin (2008:4) defined Search Engine Optimisation as:

The term Search Engine Optimization describes a diverse set of activities that you can perform to increase the number of desirable visitors who come to your website via search engines... This includes things you do to your site itself, such as making changes to your text and HTML code. It also includes communicating directly with the search engines, or pursuing other sources of traffic by making requests for listing or links. Tracking, research and competitive review are also part of the SEO package.

### **Definitions and relevant terminology**

Below is a list and brief definition (more detailed definitions and explanations will be given in the literature review) of some of the key terminology used for purposes of this study. For this study, only those terms that will be regarded as key, will be provided a specific definition as formulated by this researcher.

The researcher adhered to the South African English spelling style, but quoted sources according to the various spelling styles they used.

**Advertising:** “Advertising is purchased publicity directed according to a definite plan to influence people to act or to think as the advertiser desires” (Brewster & Palmer, 2001:8).

Mogel (2000:252) defined advertising as “messages, telling people something” and “the

act or practice of calling public attention to one's product or service, need, etc., by paid announcements in newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, or on billboards to get more customers".

Magazines essentially sell two products: they sell advertising space, the cost of which is based on circulation figures, to advertisers and they also sell content to readers (Ellonen & Kuivalainen, 2005:7). Ellonen and Kuivalainen (2005:7) noted: "Advertisers value circulation, so advertising demand and magazine demand are related."

For the purposes of this study, this researcher formulated the following definition to pertain to the term advertising as understood in the magazine industry:

Advertising is a paid announcement in a publication or public space; the purpose of which is to introduce, create awareness or promote a business, product, service or cause to consumers.

**Circulation:** According to Mogel (1998:200) it is defined as "the number of copies sold by a publication through subscription and/or newsstands sales". For the ABC, magazines sold through subscription and on the newsstands at a discount of no more than 50 percent may count as circulation (Muller, 2010:n.p.). For the purposes of this study, this researcher formulated the following definition to pertain to the term circulation as understood in the magazine industry:

Circulation is the average number of copies sold or distributed – comprising both subscriptions and newsstands sales – of a publication during a specific period. The circulation figure, which is audited by an independent organisation, is used to calculate the advertising rates.

**Content:** According to Morrish (2003:100), editorial content should be "accurate, fair, complete and entirely comprehensible". The content of a magazine is made up of editorial content (news and opinion) and advertising material. For the purposes of this

study, this researcher formulated the following definition to pertain to the term editorial content as understood in the magazine industry:

Editorial content is the objective material (text and images) that constitutes a publication, meaning the material that is not a mediated message which has been paid for or influenced by advertisers.

**Convergence:** Fourie (2001:114) provided the following explanation:

...the coming together of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the merging of telecommunications and traditional media technologies, to create new ways of producing, distributing and using knowledge, information and entertainment.

**Digital divide:** The digital divide is commonly used as the blanket term to describe practically any problems pertaining to the Internet (Norris, 2001:3). Norris (2001:4) defined the term:

...the digital divide is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing three distinct aspects. The *global divide* refers to the divergence of Internet access between industrialized and developing societies. The *social divide* concerns the gap between information rich and poor in each nation. And finally within the online community, the *democratic divide* signifies the difference between those who do, and do not, use the panoply of digital resources to engage, mobilize, and participate in public life.

**Globalisation:** Giddens (Fourie, 2001:595) defined globalisation as:

...a social process involving a growing number of people all over the world whose lives are affected on a daily basis by disembedded organisations, in other words not local or national organisations. The disembedded organisations that increasingly



affect our lives can range from international financial, political, governmental, educational and cultural organisations, to media organisations that provide us with information and entertainment which, in turn, contribute to our perceptions and understanding of reality and the world.

**Internet:** According to Okin (2005:90), the Internet is “a network of networks, or an internetwork of networked computers”. The US Federal Networking Council provided a more detailed definition (Okin, 2005:91):

- “Internet” refers to the global information system that
- (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-on;
  - (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and
  - (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein.

**Magazine:** Beetham (1996:2) described magazines as follows:

Magazines are commodities, products of the print industry. They have also become a crucial site for the advertising and sale of other commodities, whether nightgowns or convenience foods. Magazines are, therefore, deeply involved in capitalist production and consumption as well as circulating in the cultural economy of collective meanings and constructing an identity for the individual reader ...

For the purposes of this study, this researcher formulated the following definition to pertain to the term “magazine” as understood in the industry:

A magazine is a periodical publication comprising of a compilation of diverse

articles by numerous authors, as well as advertising targeted for the publication's intended audience. A magazine sells two products – namely readers to advertisers, as well as content to readers.

**Multimedia:** According to James (2003:350), multimedia “indicates a system in which different media such as text, image, sound etc. are combined”.

**Nielsens NetRatings:** According to information obtained from the Nielsen NetRatings website (2010:n.p.), this company offers services such as market research and buzz measurement (this refers to the hype or “buzz” generated about a particular topic on a social network site) and analysing market dynamics in order for Internet media to understand, measure and respond to online consumers.

**Website:** A website is “a collection of web pages” (James, 2003:366). A web page is “a page containing text, image or audio or a combination of all the above, which is available on the Internet and is accessed using HTTP protocols”, he stated.

**World Wide Web (www):** Often incorrectly referred to as the Internet, the World Wide Web – established in 1990 – is actually an intricate network of hyperlinked documents and is a universal medium for accessing information from any computer (Gillies & Cailliau, 2000:1):

The Internet is like a network of electronic roads criss-crossing the planet – the much-hyped information superhighway. The Web is just one of many services using that network, just as many different kinds of vehicles use the roads.

## **ADDENDUM B: Research Questionnaire**

STUDENT: Fidelia van der Linde

STUDENT NUMBER: 14926768 – 2006

DEGREE: MPhil (Journalism) at the University of Stellenbosch

PROPOSED WORKING TITLE: Print magazines and their online counterparts: How magazines' websites affect the circulation figures, advertising income and editorial content of the print publication

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

NAME:

TITLE / JOB DESCRIPTION:

#### **General questions**

- Give your opinion on the relationship between consumer magazines and their companion websites.
- Do you think companion websites help to create awareness of the print publication, or do the two mediums compete aggressively?
- Do you think magazine websites will eventually obviate the need for print magazines? Motivate your answer.
- How do you determine whether a magazine's companion website is successful?
- What are the short-term and long-term objectives of having a companion website?
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a companion website.
- Does the magazine's companion website have the same competitors as the print publication?
- How do you market the print publication and its companion website?
- Compare the resources allocated to the print publication as opposed to its companion website. What is the reason for this allocation of resources?

- What impact does the digital divide have on the South African media in general?

### **Circulation figures**

- What impact does launching a companion website have on the circulation figures of a companion magazine website? Motivate your answer.
- Evaluate the effect of the magazine's companion website on demand for the print publication.
- How do companion websites help to increase the print magazine's subscriptions and circulation figures?
- Do companion websites help to attract new audiences or entice the online audience to buy the print publication?
- Do companion websites attract more local or international readers?
- What percentage of readers buy both the print publication and visit the companion website?
- What incentives are in place to encourage readers to both buy the publication and to visit the companion website?

### **Advertising income**

- How do companion websites attract new advertisers?
- What cross advertising opportunities exist between the print publication and its companion website?
- What impact does launching a companion website have on the advertising income of a consumer magazine? Motivate your answer.
- Considering that advertising online is generally cheaper than advertising in the print publication, how do you prevent advertisers from advertising online only?

### **Editorial content**

- What impact does the companion website have on the editorial content of a consumer magazine? Motivate your answer.
- Do companion websites enable better or more effective interaction with the magazine's readers?
- What is your opinion on restricted or “closed” websites where users must pay to access content?
- How often should a successful website be updated? Daily, weekly or monthly? Motivate your answer.
- Will readers pay to access the magazine's content online or would they still rather buy the print publication? Motivate your answer.
- How do the companion websites offer added value for loyal magazine readers and subscribers?
- How successful are websites with certain restricted “subscribers only” areas?
- How can websites be used to help generate magazine content?
- How can the print publication utilise online user generated content?
- Do you simply publish the same content that has appeared in the print magazine online, or do you re-edit and package the content specifically for reading online? Motivate your answer
- What interactive features have you used to better connect with your online audience?
- Do you have any other comments or information which you think may be relevant to this study?

Thank you for making the time and effort to complete this questionnaire.